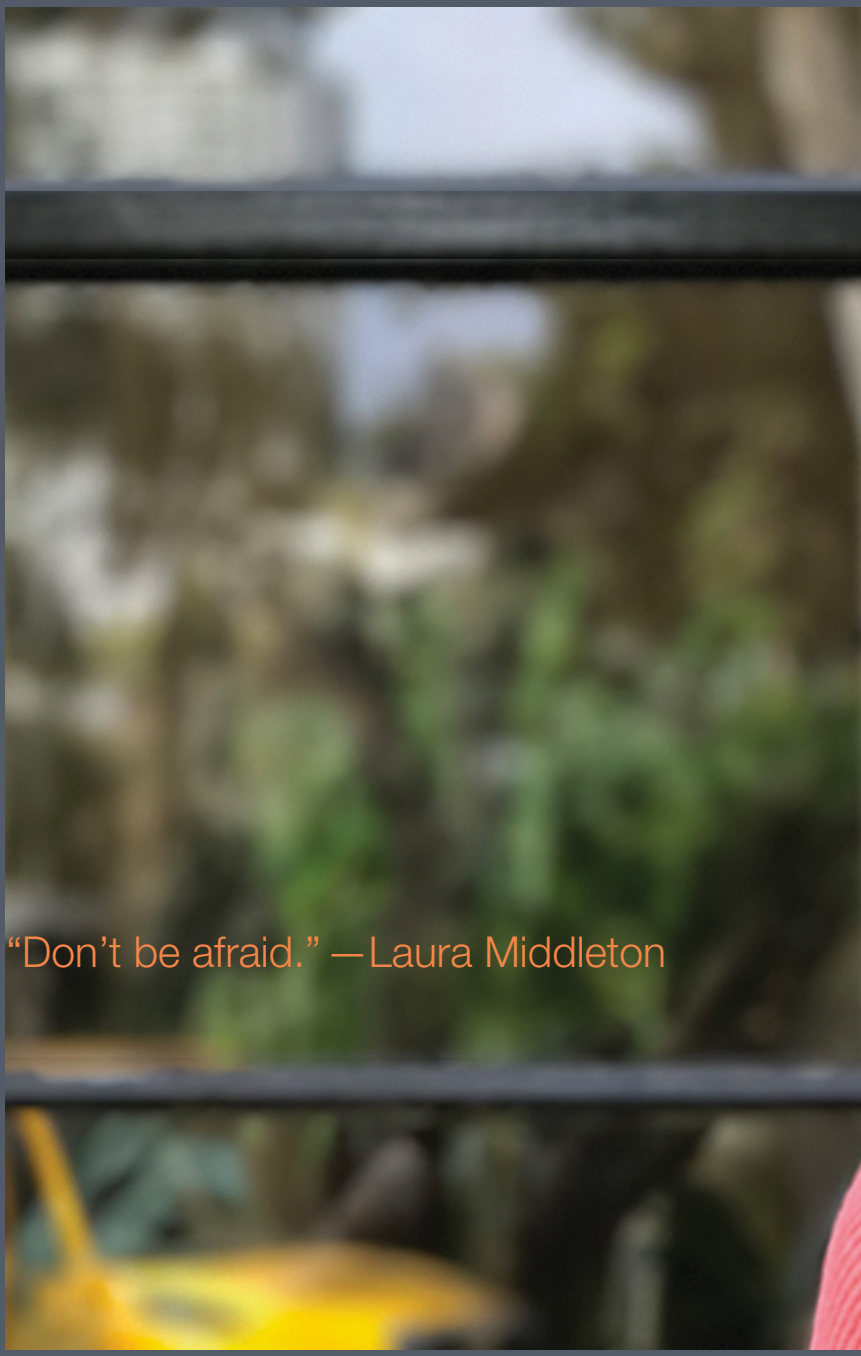

LIVE BRAVE.
THE ARCHITECT PAINTER PRESS


“Don’t be afraid.” —Laura Middleton



LIVE BRAVE

THE ARCHITECT PAINTER PRESS COPYEDITOR LAURA MIDDLETON, of Sacramento, California, exemplified the ideals of service at the heart of this company, which was launched in 2005 under the banner, "Live Brave."

The daughter of a loving but inattentive mother and a kind but absent father, Laura pinballed during childhood from Stillwater, Oklahoma, her birthplace, to lands farther west, Wyoming, Montana, Alaska, even Australia, her kid brother Terry tucked under her arm. She emerged self-reliant, strong, a protector of the weak, and an intrepid lifelong traveler, adversity shaping her character, her brave childhood serving as psychological prelude to her brave adulthood and the life she carved out on the east coast. In the last year of her life, Laura circled back across the country to the soundtrack of Melissa Etheridge's anthem "California": "Raised up on mid-western dreams / . . . I pointed my dreams west / To California / Come rescue me / California / I am almost free." Almost.

Throughout her life, cut short by illness, Laura helped other people. During 35 years of selfless action, inspired leadership, and hard work on behalf of the welfare of others, from Tenacre Foundation in Princeton, New Jersey, to Huru International and The Circle in the Square Theater in New York City, Laura tried to improve people's lives, to lift people up and grace them with encouragement and hope. She loved people. People felt her love and loved Laura right back. Through her poise in the face of tragedy—Terry died at 29 in a railroad accident—through her serenity and courage in the face of her own demoralizing danger, through her independent mind, her staunch support of social justice and human equality, reflected in her radical life choices, Laura walked this earth in tune with the music of her kind soul and brave heart.

An easygoing woman who didn't see herself as an entitled princess but as a sturdy pioneer, Laura was a globe-trotting explorer of exotic places and an inner traveler of outlier ideas. She was a lover of art—music, painting, architecture, literature, movies, theater—and a natural born writer. Blessed with intelligence and humility, she lived true to her "zest for new adventure" and "quest for inner peace."

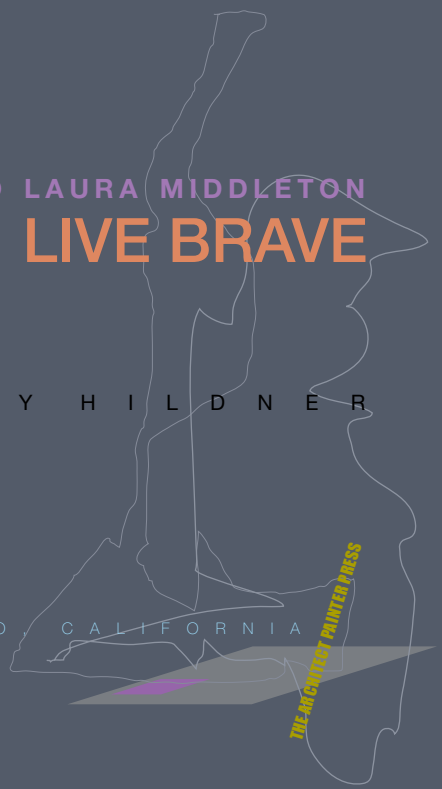
Laura served this enterprise for seven years not only as copyeditor but also as practical and spiritual consultant, hero, mentor, and loyal friend. And in her loving memory, in her honor, The Architect Painter Press must "press" on, hell-bent on somehow living up to Laura's example of how to truly Live Brave. We begin with this book.

Q.F.B., Laura. Quest Forward Brave.

A TRIBUTE TO LAURA MIDDLETON

LIVE BRAVE

JEFFREY HILDNER



SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA

THE ARCHITECT PAINTER PRESS

L I V E B R A V E
A TRIBUTE TO LAURA MIDDLETON

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DUST JACKET 3: SEA RANCH GIRL

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Unless noted otherwise, the author, JEF7REY HILDNER ARCHITECT aka The Architect Painter, created all photographs, illustrations, paintings, and other artwork—including buildings, which required a team of special people, from inspired owners and skilled contractors to talented interns, students, and professionals. No credit lines supplied for snapshots and for professional photos taken by persons unknown. The author reproduces here in this book selective pages that he created for his book *VISUAL EF9ECTS | Architecture and the Chess Game of Form & Story*.

Thank you, Navaz Dakin, for stepping onto the stage of my life when I needed you most and doing for this book what Laura would do if I could somehow get a copy to her: proofread.

BOOK WRITTEN, CREATED, DESIGNED, AND PRODUCED BY JEF7REY HILDNER

THE ARCHITECT
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SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA

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I will always love you, Laura

LAURA DAWN MIDDLETON

NOVEMBER 27, 1963 – NOVEMBER 29, 2017

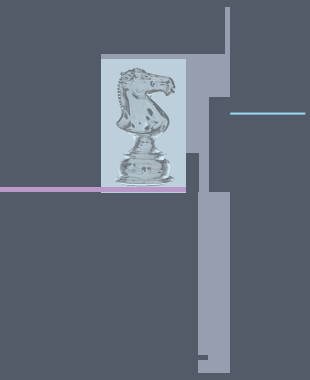
you love to travel, darling
and now you've punched a one-way ticket to worlds beyond earth's horizon

i don't know where you are
. . . the great Architect hasn't rolled out the Floor Plan
but whatever Room in this Cosmic House you now find yourself
—i hope you can still write and dance and dream . . .
and hear melissa etheridge sing "california"

you must fulfill your special destiny, sweetheart—
with zest stay true to your brave quest

so let's trust the Journey, shall we?
carry me in your heart as i carry you in my heart
. . . and wait for me, my love

slate





"Laura Dawn Middleton: Room 5, Sea Ranch Lodge | View Of Bihler Point," 04.26.2017 8:02 pm

— your silver knight

Laura's passing hurts. Deeply. How much does it hurt? To lose your truelove? This famous scene from the movie *Cast Away* conveys my pain: "I'm sorry, Wilson!" www.youtube.com/watch?v=sTGiazmsCZI&app=desktop.

Chuck Noland, the story's cursed hero, found himself shipwrecked on an island in the middle of nowhere, imprisoned by water, "No land" in sight. His fortune turned when a volleyball washed ashore. He named the volleyball "Wilson," the name of the manufacturer stamped on the ball. Wilson became Chuck's symbolic soul mate who rescued and nourished him psychologically and emotionally during his excruciating ordeal. The way my soul mate, Laura, rescued and nourished me during mine. But then Laura faced her own ordeal. A grave ordeal. And like Chuck, who couldn't save Wilson, I couldn't save Laura. Laura and I were best friends for 35 years, together at last for the final 3½ years of Laura's life. Star-crossed lovers doomed to a tragic fate as old as time.

“WILSON, I’M SORRY! I’M SORRY! WILSON! . . . WILSON!”

—Screenwriter William Broyles, Jr. | Chuck Noland in *Cast Away*

LIVE BRAVE



LAURA . . . MY WILSON . . . MY NORTH STAR

LIVE BRAVE

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LIVE BRAVE

Thank you, professional care providers at Sloan Kettering in New York City and UC Davis in Sacramento, CA, for attending to Laura so beautifully during her ordeal. Thank you, family and friends, including my bereavement circle and our counselor, for helping me along this dark road—you are each a special color in the rainbow of empathy, solace, and new hope.

PREFACE

I created this book to serve as a memorial for my truelove, Laura Middleton —my steadfast friend of 35 years and my partner for the last 3½ years of her life. The book features the tribute that I wrote for Laura on April 1, 2018, Easter Sunday. I titled the tribute "Live Brave" and started writing at the stroke of midnight. I wrote till the sun came up.

I first posted "Live Brave" on the Facebook page "Celebration of Laura Middleton," which Laura's high school friend Navaz and I created to honor Laura's wish that I provide a way for family and friends to share their memories, grief, and love.

To more fully and enduringly honor Laura's human life and immortal spirit, I present "Live Brave" between the covers of a book. This book, which includes additional commentary and photos, also serves as a threshold to another tribute to Laura that I hope to create—a building: an architectural monument. I've given it a name—

LIVE B.R.A.V.E. | The Middleton Memorial

I learned from David Emerald's book *The Power of T.E.D.* that the opposite of a victim is a creator. Navaz inspired me to go from victim to creator by taking the lead on our Facebook page and lighting a fire under me, inspiring me to act courageously and work together to create our special Facebook place, to carve out a sacred online space, for Laura and all of us who love her and whose lives she touched. I needed to feel the flames of that fire, to feel the darkness of sorrow give way to the light of courage and action. One of Laura's last wishes was that I would provide a way for everyone to gather and share their memories if she were to pass. Navaz answered the call without even knowing that Laura had heralded the call. And without our Facebook page, I would not have written "Live Brave," the tribute to Laura that started a seismic chain reaction of creativity—creator activity—that includes this book. Our Facebook page has helped to unify Team Laura. Family and friends have shared—and I hope will continue to share through decades to come—their Laura-inspired photos and feelings.

Writing "Live Brave" sparked me to make a video of the intro. Here's the link: archive.org/details/LiveBraveTrailer. The video features Laura's voice and some of her photos. Like her dad, Laura loved photography. She loved taking pictures of people and wildlife and buildings and landscapes, you name it, she was a real shutterbug, especially on trips when she'd eye the world through the lens of her trusty digital Nikon.

"Advance the canvas all at once," said Post-Impressionist painter Paul Cézanne. Cézanne's advice applies to more than a painting. The large canvas of my life includes many creative projects that center on Laura and our love story. I'm advancing the canvas all at once, including this

book and the book about architecture that I started working on during the last two years of Laura's life: *Visual Ef9ects*. Neither book would appear the way they do if I hadn't advanced both books at the same time—or if I hadn't painted another part of the canvas by writing the Facebook tribute, "Live Brave." I include pages from *Visual Ef9ects* here in *Live Brave*: the *Visual Ef9ects* dedication (pp. 10–13); a photo of Laura and me from 1987 (pp. 20–21); a photo of Laura at Sea Ranch Lodge in 2017, her last year (pp. 90–91); the special collage that I created, "DREAM HOUSE | Composition For Laura" (pp. 102–103); the handwritten postcard that Laura sent me in October 2014, a postcard of Henri Matisse's painting of Icarus (pp. 126–127).

When I typed out "Live Brave" for the Facebook document that I posted on Easter Sunday, 2018, Facebook didn't give me the option to set the tribute in the font I wanted to use. But I do have access to that font here, and I honor the spirit of my tribute to Laura by setting it in the classic font used by screenwriters: Courier. Now, my tribute isn't actually a screenplay, but I did picture it that way, framing the tribute by "Fade In" when I started at midnight and by "Fade Out" when I stopped soon after sunrise.

I think of Laura and our enduring friendship, our intertwined lives from 1982–2017, as a movie. A good movie, but, sadly, one without a happy ending—an ending that we associate with the age-old story of star-crossed love. And so in honor of star-crossed lovers throughout all time and place, I dedicate this book to my shining star, Laura Dawn.

JEF7REY HILDNER | SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA





PREVIOUS TWO PAGES: LAURA & ME, 1987. PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY

"You know the Greeks didn't write obituaries. They only asked one question after a man died: 'Did he have passion?'"

—Screenwriter Marc Klein, *Serendipity*

Laura Middleton wasn't a man, so if she had lived during the time of the ancient Greeks, they would likely have ignored her death. But in her special lighthearted, gentle, and idealistic laid-back way, Laura had passion. Passion for life. Passionate for work, in the service of others. Passion for love.

Like the ancient Greeks, this book doesn't offer an obituary. Someone else could perhaps write that. I seek to honor Laura, through the pages of this book, in a different way.

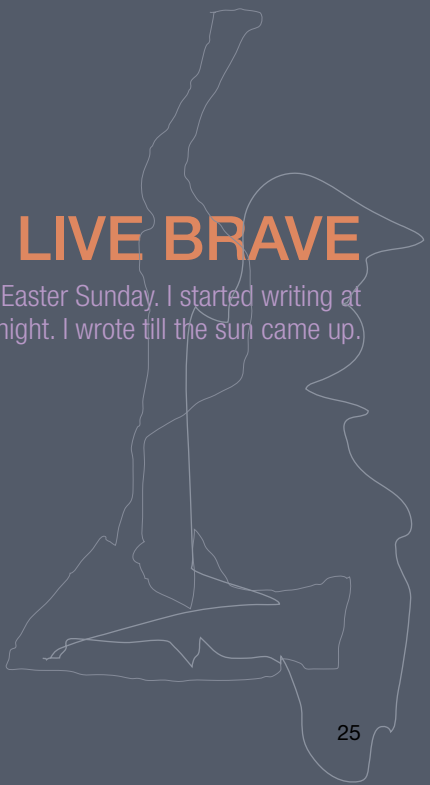
And maybe there's another question that we must ask when someone dies: Did they have compassion? Yes, through every fiber of her being, Laura Middleton radiated compassion. A harmless soul, to the bottom of her pretty toes, Laura had the courage to be kind.

Why past tense? Laura continues to live with passion and compassion. Immortal, her heart beats to the undying rhythm of Life beyond the illusion of a mortal clock.



LIVE BRAVE

I wrote “Live Brave” on April 1, 2018, Easter Sunday. I started writing at the stroke of midnight. I wrote till the sun came up.





LIVE BRAVE

Laura liked when I called her “Pony Girl.” The nickname called to mind one of her favorite childhood photos . . . and her Oklahoma roots. For me, the photo and nickname also evoke Laura’s deepest truth.

FADE IN:

INT. OFFICE OF THE ARCHITECT PAINTER PRESS - SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA - EASTER SUNDAY APRIL 1, 2018 - MIDNIGHT

Pony Girl

The gentle smiling innocent soul you see tucked under that cowgirl hat?

She grew up. But Laura Middleton stayed the same. Kindhearted, good-natured, and harmless as a palm tree.

And you can feel that so tangibly in the recent photo of Laura on the next page.



Laura stands in front of the Eames House, Pacific Palisades, Los Angeles, California. May 6, 2017. Full photo shown on pages 2–3.

LIVE BRAVE

We hoped someday we would build our Dream House. Where we would stay young together and live for the rest of our lives.

I took the photo about a year ago, in the spring of 2017, in California, where Laura spent the last year of her life.

That was the day that Laura and I and my daughter, Emily, went to see the Charles and Ray Eames House, a famous husband and wife house perched on a bluff overlooking the Pacific Ocean in Pacific Palisades, Los Angeles. We went to do research for the house that Laura and I hoped someday we would build.

Our Dream House.

Where we would stay young together and live for the rest of our lives.

Same Laura, right? About 40 years later, there's our Pony Girl, a radiant young woman, looking healthy and strong, her natural outer beauty a reflection of her supernatural inner beauty, her light blue eyes most definitely windows to her true-blue soul.

Same angel face. Same shy smile. Same thick wavy hair and sculpted chin. Same sunshine and tender heart. A portrait of love.

Brave love.

LIVE BRAVE

“A zest for new adventures and a quest for inner peace.”

In that California photo, Laura's still wearing her cowgirl hat. We just can't see it. And she's still serenely centered, just as she was on her pony.

One of the things that really speaks to me about Laura's childhood photo is how it captures at an early age both sides of her special Gold Coin Nature.

Not only her soft laid-back spirit but also her intrepid pioneering will.

Her special blend of courage and calm. Independent mindset and accommodating grace.

We feel Laura's quiet nature, we feel her sweet love for that lucky pony, but we also see, Laura's going somewhere. She's on the move. We sense the dawning of Laura's twin life desires -- which she put very simply:

"A zest for new adventures and a quest for inner peace."

Laura grew up fast, on the go from the git-go. Almost from the time she was born, in Stillwater, Oklahoma, till she landed in Farmington, Arkansas, where she started high school, Laura pinballed from

LIVE BRAVE

Every test served to free the angel of Laura's true self.

one family custodian and one state to another, South Dakota, Wyoming, Washington, Alaska, with an exotic year or so in Australia when she was about 10, tucking her kid brother, Terry, under her arm as the two of them fended for themselves through a hardscrabble helter-skelter childhood marked by an absent father and tinged with neglect and abuse.

The way Laura protected Terry? That would be the way Laura would shield and defend the weak, disadvantaged, or bullied throughout her life.

Laura's nomadic childhood inspired her lifelong wanderlust.

Adversity didn't make her weak. It made her strong. Every test served to free the angel of Laura's true self. Her resilient and uncomplaining bitter-free stoic character. Her selfless heart. Her special blend of The Golden Rule, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you," and grit.

Soft strength.

LAURA DAWN MIDDLETON: *Outdoor explorer* -- bursting with curiosity and wonder, itching to giddyup and ride . . . globe-trotting all through her short adult life from one adventure to another,

LIVE BRAVE

Laura cultivated the garden of her inner world through prayer and self-reflection shaped by journaling and books.

Africa, China, Monhegan Island in Maine, the Andes Mountains in Peru (in the fall of 2014, Laura hiked to the 15th-century Inca citadel Machu Picchu that rests 7,972 feet above sea level), and her final trip, in August, 2017, Yellowstone.

Indoor explorer -- sojourning through the land of promises and betrayals, hopes and heartbreaks, the peaks and valleys of human life . . . cultivating the garden of her inner world through prayer and self-reflection shaped by journaling and books. And always easygoing, reserved, kind, gentle with the reins, happy, and free of fear.

Pony Girl.

My steadfast best friend of 35 years.

Brave Peace

Like Laura, I too seek a life balanced between outer expression and inner peace.

But I'm a whole lot better at the first one than the second one. And I'd score even lower without Laura. Laura gave me a goal to shoot for. She came back into my life when I desperately needed help. My inner peace? On a 0-10 scale? Minus 10.

LIVE BRAVE

During my calamity, Laura nursed me back to life.

But during my calamity, the divorce from my second wife, Laura nursed me back to life. My inner peace climbed to an all-time high: 7?

And my happiness climbed even higher: 11. And now, when I'm tested more harshly by sorrow and grief than I've ever been tested -- and I've fallen many times in my life into bleak character-test darkness but nothing as dark as Laura's departure —- tested by the agony of personal loss and existential despair, I picture Laura.

I picture how Laura faced heartbreak when Terry died.

In 1994, Terry, on drugs, stood in front of an oncoming train.

Terry and Laura's close friend Navaz caught up with me about three weeks ago. We hadn't talked for almost 30 years. Navaz, who lives in Australia, is one of Laura's longtime friends from their high school days at the Daycroft School in Greenwich, Connecticut.

(Laura's protective grandmother sent Laura to Daycroft in the hope she would find a better life on the East Coast. She did.)

LIVE BRAVE

The nurse with the golden heart who rescued me rescued Navaz.

It was Navaz's idea to create our special Facebook page for Laura, where I first posted this tribute, "Celebration of Laura Middleton." Navaz told me that when she got the awful news about Terry, "Laura had to console me. She seemed OK. At peace."

Laura explained to Navaz, "Terry thought he could stop the train. But he couldn't."

Simple as that.

But not so simple really. Rather complex. Laura's apparent matter-of-fact take-it-in-stride reaction to her brother's tragic death both masks an emotional complexity deeply wired within Laura's steady-as-she-goes self-protective psyche and reveals the authenticity of her help-others-first golden heart.

The nurse with the golden heart who rescued me rescued Navaz.

And so. Now, like her brother Terry, Laura's gone too. And I really miss her. And I've got a different emotional chipset than Laura. I'm an artist. And we both knew, when it came to an expressive show of emotions, we were opposite poles.

LIVE BRAVE

The Laura we saw onstage was the same Laura I saw backstage.

Laura, the unruffled flatliner. Walden Pond.

I, the flux capacitor, a boisterous wave. The Atlantic Ocean.

Laura, Control. Jeffrey, Soul. Laura, the audience. I, the actor. Theatrical and emotive. Rarely in front of the curtain but often behind the curtain, where I feel safe. Laura made me feel safe.

But the Laura we saw onstage was the same Laura I saw backstage.

I know she felt safe with me. Very safe. In fact, what Laura may well have valued most about our love is that she trusted that I would not abandon her, she knew I would stay by her side all the way. No matter what. And she did let loose now and then, spilling honestly about how she was feeling and struggling with this or that. Which she admitted was very therapeutic. And it helped deepen and strengthen our relationship, our intimacy and trust. She just wasn't used to doing that, self-revealing. So it didn't come naturally. She lived most of her life keeping her inner world all bottled up.

Or writing it down.

LIVE BRAVE

I summoned my inner Dylan Thomas to “Rage, rage against the dying of the light.”

Laura loves theater, so she actually enjoyed when Jeffrey the entertainer would go on a rant about injustice or fraud or some other kind of nonsense going on either in society or in our own lives, throwing my emotional paint at the canvas of the universe.

Splat.

Like my cosmic cries on Laura's behalf throughout her illness, a plea, a demand, a request, summoning my inner Dylan Thomas to "Rage, rage against the dying of the light" and doubling down on the spirit of Rod Tidwell's demand "Show me the money" in the movie *Jerry McGuire*: "God, please. Pleeeease. Show us the mercy. Show us the mercy!!!!!!!"

Splat.

But as I try to escape this deserted island of psychological isolation and despair, feeling shipwrecked like the cursed hero in the movie *Cast Away*, Chuck Noland -- a man imprisoned by water, "No land" in sight, saved by a stray volleyball that washes ashore he names "Wilson" because that's the name of the manufacturer stamped on the ball, his new friend, his only friend, the symbolic entity who rescued and sustained him

Laura has awakened in me a fuller grasp of this truth: Peace isn't the gift of death. Peace is the essence of Life. Peace is God.

psychologically, emotionally, spiritually during his excruciating ordeal -- I picture my Wilson, Laura Dawn, the woman who saved me four years ago, in April 2014, when I was shipwrecked.

Shipwrecked by a brutal divorce and not knowing that a few years later I would be shipwrecked again . . . that the worst was yet to come.

I picture how Laura endured her final shipwreck. I see her composure. Her sweet temper. Her serenity. I see her special refraction of Godlike qualities shine through the dark clouds of her doomsday storm.

I feel Laura's brave heart.

Through her example in the face of adversity, Laura has awakened in me a fuller grasp of this truth: Peace isn't the gift of death. Peace is the promise and potential reality of human life. Peace is the essence of Life. Peace is God.

God is Peace.

"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace . . . " -- Jeremiah 29:11.

LIVE BRAVE

If there's any sanity behind the Architecture of Reality, Laura lives.

Matthew 5:9 -- “Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.”

The children of Peace.

Wilson saved Chuck Noland, but Chuck couldn’t save Wilson. It broke Chuck’s heart. Laura saved me, but I couldn’t save her. It breaks my heart.

But through it all, thanks to Laura, I see more clearly, more tangibly, more relevantly, you don’t have to die to Rest in Peace.

We can rest in peace right here. Moment to moment. And nobody did this better than Laura.

Check that: Nobody *does* this better than Laura. Because if there’s any sanity behind the Architecture of Reality, Laura lives. And always will.

Laura showed me how someone really could remain calm, even sunny, in the face of grave danger. For the most part, all through her 2 1/2 year ordeal, you’d never know it to look at her or talk to her that anything was wrong. If you asked her how she was doing, she would always sweetly say, “I’m OK. How are you?”

LIVE BRAVE

Laura lived true to the spirit of her self-identified one word life theme: Nurse.

I marvel at Laura's unruffled poise and unflinching strength, her undaunted hope for recovery, in the face of disease and death. Her peace.

Brave peace.

Nurse Middleton

The unflappable Laura Middleton. Bombs can fall as she walks through life's hospital tents of anguish and pain and suffering and confusion and fear pitched across the valley of death along our wild roller-coaster ride through this wacky and mysterious matrix of existence, a Cosmic Architecture riddled way too much with death, even if only an illusion.

But Laura Middleton fears no evil. Like Florence Nightingale, concerned only about the welfare of others, Laura lived true to the spirit of her self-identified one word life theme: Nurse. And through an ironical plot twist, in the end, rather than Laura taking care of me, I took care of her. Rather than the nurse taking care of the architect, the architect took care of the nurse.

Laura deserved better care.
And a better fate.

LIVE BRAVE

Laura unpacked the subtext. She helped me see what's behind the visible -- helped me discern more clearly the emotional truth beneath the surface.

Star-Crossed Writer

Laura loves the movie *Out of Africa*. We saw it together when it first came out in 1985. We watched it together again 30 years later, before she got sick, and I was the beneficiary of Laura's DVD-quality special features commentary. We paused often so she could point to the characters and tell me what they're thinking. She unpacked the subtext. She helped me see what's behind the visible -- helped me discern more clearly the emotional truth beneath the surface.

Just as she helped me see things more clearly in life. Because when this highly evolved emotionally intelligent woman turned her uncanny powers of perception toward me, toward my inner and outer challenges, my struggles and dreams, she reframed my view. Laura gave me new eyes.

It makes sense, doesn't it, that *Out of Africa* would be Laura's favorite planet Earth movie? A movie that features stunning landscapes and wildlife -- and adventures in a faraway land. Laura loves beautiful vistas and animals -- and adventures in a faraway land.

A movie about Africa.

LIVE BRAVE

Out of Africa **spoke to Laura deep down in so many ways.**

A faraway land that Laura truly loves. She traveled to Africa many times, working for over five years, till the final two years of her life, with the nonprofit Manhattan-based Huru International to help teenage girls in Kenya.

A movie about a writer.

One of Laura's *favorite* writers, Karen Blixen aka Isak Dinesen, who self-revealed -- channeled her inner world -- primarily through the written word.

Just like Laura. And just like diarist Elaine Thompson, Laura's mom.

Out of Africa spoke to Laura deep down in so many ways, including how the movie celebrates the two main sources of Laura's self-education -- the two main ways that Miguel de Cervantes said we all ultimately learn about life.

Books and Travel.

And Laura's love for both -- her love for reading and writing, aspiring to one day author her own book, together with her love for adventure -- infuses the pages of her diaries and the posts on her blogs.

LIVE BRAVE

Laura's diaries and blogs reveal that she too, like her travel hero Isak Dinesen, is a gifted writer.

Laura's diaries and blogs reveal that she too, like her travel hero Isak Dinesen, is a gifted writer.

Read Laura's blog "Meanderings." You'll see. For example, here's an excerpt from her post on Thursday, March 11, 2010, called "Hemming."

> *The sewing box was purchased shortly after our arrival in Australia and though mother had a pre-assigned teaching post in the suburbs we lived in a downtown Sydney hotel until an apartment was secured near her school. In the interim a daily commuter train took us near our new school. Within a week, I stepped off the train and neglected to pick up my sewing box on the way out. Off it went with the train. Never to be seen again. By me at least. I cried that day. And mother didn't buy me a new kit. I don't remember how I got by in sewing class. Those memories are tucked in the unaccessible creases of my brain. And maybe that's where my memory of learning to hem is. It's tangled up with a multitude of humiliating moments in a ball I don't have the patience or desire to untangle. As long as I can recall that hem stitch though, I've retained all I need from that knotty experience.*

LIVE BRAVE

Writing gave Laura a way to safely reveal herself and nourish her soul.

Laura was a planet Earth travel writer, writing about her trips on trains and through the exterior world of jungles and lions and tropical islands and seas, which she publicly reveals online . . .

and writing about her trips through the interior world of her most personal thoughts and speculations, which she privately conceals offline.

Writing would be a natural fit for Laura given her human personality profile, a Myers-Briggs INFP idealist who internalizes most of her thoughts and withdraws into her shell of introspection and self-protection like a turtle, her favorite animal. No wonder she especially loved her trip to the Gallapagos Islands.

Writing gave Laura a way to safely reveal herself and nourish her soul -- a way to do for herself what she did so freely and naturally for others: care for them, look after them, advise them, help them, and encourage them. Writing gave Laura a way to be not only the nurse for other people but also to be the nurse for herself.

And Laura took writing seriously.

LIVE BRAVE

Laura only feared one thing.

“You must give yourself the opportunity to write!” Laura scribbled in one of her journals as she approached 45. “Even if it’s frustrating. Even if it isn’t any good. Even if it doesn’t pay the bills.”

Every time I look at my black cap with the word in white letters across the front, “Writer,” I see Laura. Nurse Middleton loved wearing that hat.

And *Out of Africa* is a movie about love.

During her struggle with cancer, Laura was severely tested. She endured excruciating and debilitating adversity. But she really only feared one thing. She was afraid that maybe God was playing a cruel joke on us, that after we finally got together 32 years after we first met, our time might be cut short, just as time was cut short for Denys Finch Hatton and Karen Blixen, *Out of Africa*’s star-crossed lovers.

Laura’s one fear came true.

But then, as Laura and I knew, star-crossed love (ill-fated love, love that doesn’t run its course but ends too soon, if not almost before it starts, whether ended by death or another form of

LIVE BRAVE

Star-crossed love is a tragic tale as old as time.
Part of the sad archetypal fabric of human life.

irreparable departure: actual death or symbolic death) is a tragic tale as old as time.

Part of the sad archetypal fabric of human life. And probably always will be. From Orpheus and Eurydice of Greek myth and Aeneas and Dido of Roman myth to the Medieval tale of Tristan and Isolde to Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet . . .

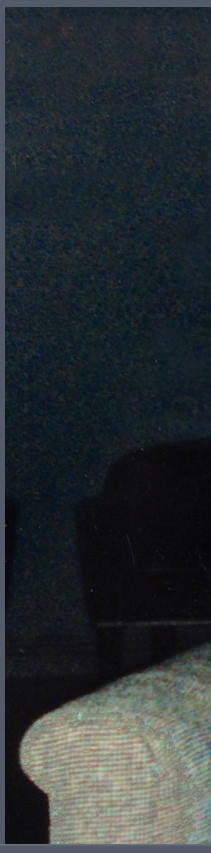
From modern myths conjured by the storytellers and screenwriters who bring fictional star-crossed lovers to life, like Jake and Evelyn in *Chinatown* and Rick and Ilsa in *Casablanca* . . .

. . . and Steve and Diana in *Wonder Woman*, Oliver and Elio in *Call Me by Your Name*, and Chuck Noland and Kelly Frears in *Cast Away* . . .

To real people like 20th-century Denys and Karen or 12th-century Abelard and Heloise or 19th century Asa and Mary -- Asa Gilbert Eddy and Mary Baker Eddy were married for little more than 5 years, January 1, 1877 — June 3, 1882, when Asa died.

Laura and I just hoped the divine Screenwriter would craft a different storyline for us.

No such luck.



LIVE BRAVE

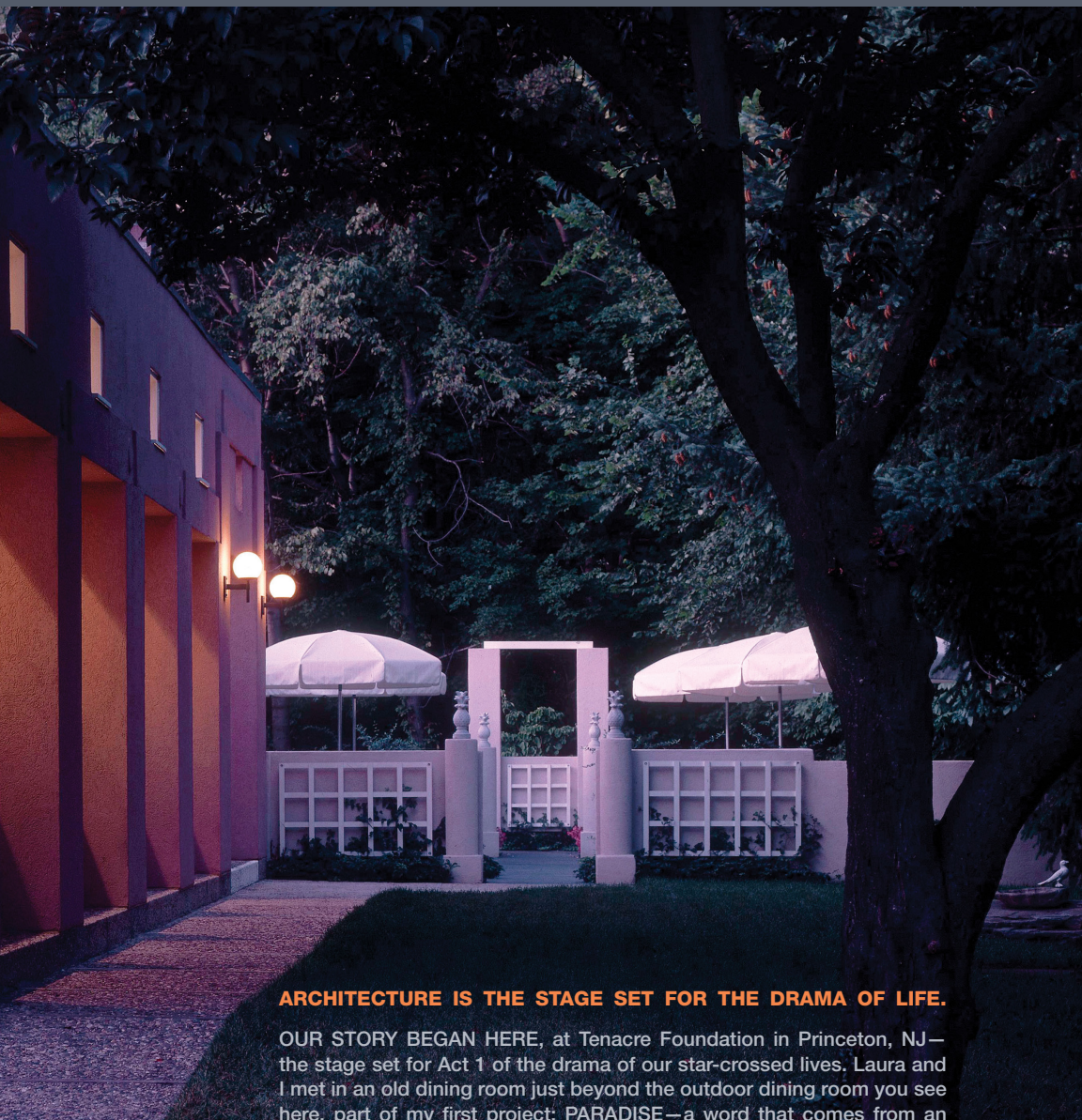
THE ARCHITECT AND THE NURSE

Tenacre Foundation, Princeton, NJ. When I designed the building that you see us sitting in—a building called The Center—Laura worked part-time in my architecture office and made study models of the custom light fixtures not yet installed over the bare bulbs on the pilasters behind us.



ME & LAURA, 1987





ARCHITECTURE IS THE STAGE SET FOR THE DRAMA OF LIFE.

OUR STORY BEGAN HERE, at Tenacre Foundation in Princeton, NJ—the stage set for Act 1 of the drama of our star-crossed lives. Laura and I met in an old dining room just beyond the outdoor dining room you see here, part of my first project: PARADISE—a word that comes from an ancient Persian word that means "walled garden." Project PARADISE also includes indoor dining: the building on the left, an employees' cafeteria. I started designing the project in 1982, the year I met Laura.

LIVE BRAVE

I miss Laura's hands, her beautiful slender skilled fingers weaving with mine.

Life Coach

Laura amplified my life. She made it way better. In more ways than I could ever say. She made me laugh. Even when she was unwell and resting in bed. She'd get on a roll and never let up. And I'd be gasping for air. I told her, "Honey, you do stand-up lying down."

I pitched her my plan. "I'm gonna book you in a comedy club. I'll roll you in, and you crack 'em up."

"OK, honey," she said. "Let's do that."

We held hands all the time, on our walks and on the bus to the pool and at the movies and on the front porch and in the backyard as we sipped sparkling water and lime in our Target lounge chairs and gazed at the palm tree across the street that soars into the sky to catch the western sunlight at day's end. I miss Laura's hands, her beautiful slender skilled fingers weaving with mine, communicating silently through the Morse code of our hands and hearts, making us feel as one. She put her arm around me as much as I put my arm around her because she knew that made me feel like boyfriend and girlfriend, made me feel loved. She gave me

LIVE BRAVE

Laura cast herself in the role of Mercedes for me:
Keep the world at bay for me.
Cheerlead me.
Mentor me -- tell me “Go” when I feel “No.”

words of encouragement and quality time and assured me everything in my life would be OK when I was scared it might not be, reminding me I'm not a metaphysical worrier, I'm a metaphysical warrior.

Laura told me about the special role that Mercedes Barcha Pardo played for her husband, the Columbian novelist Gabriel García Márquez. Laura and I hoped to get married one day. But even though we never made it that far, she cast herself in the role of Mercedes for me: Shield me and defend me. Gatekeeper for me. Keep the world at bay for me. Cheerlead me. Mentor me -- tell me "Go" when I feel "No." Support the progressive realization of my worthy ideals. Support and defend my work.

And Laura gave me what I really want: a life balanced between the two basic human needs that Freud said must be met for most people to feel happy -- what I've decided to call the Gold Coin of Human Happiness: on one side, Work ... on the other side, Love. Work & Love. And if a coin could have three sides, I'd add Health.

Laura gave me the gift of her priceless calming influence, her sweet nonjudgmental forgiving soul, her purity, humility, soft-spoken manner, and her uncanny perception and intelligence.

LIVE BRAVE

“Darling,” she said, “the thing is, don’t be afraid.”

I met Laura when she was 18. I was 28. I was married. She wasn't.

We met in 1982 in Princeton, New Jersey, at Tenacre Foundation, where Laura served for 20 years as a Christian Science nurse, six of those years as Head of Nursing. She also worked part-time for a while in my architecture office at Tenacre as a model-maker. For 35 years, during the four marriages between us, two each, Laura gave me the gift of her enduring friendship, cheerleading spirit, and loyal support.

Even till the very end, laid up in a hospital bed with guard rails in the living room of our house here in Sacramento, Laura remained strong and brave, serene and gracious in the face of adversity, still thinking more about the welfare of others than about herself.

Laura knew how hard losing her would be for me. On her 54th birthday, two days before she departed what Buckminster Fuller called "Spaceship Earth," she tried to console me. She advised me how to face this adversity, how to brave my own quest. She said so simply, in words I'll hear her say, in her beautiful sweet voice, forever, "Darling," she said, "the thing is, don't be afraid."

LIVE BRAVE

Laura, darling, I don't know where you are. The divine Architect hasn't rolled out the Floor Plan.

Brave Quest

And before she passed, fearless Laura was planning a trip to the one place on Earth she wanted most to go before moving on. She'd visited all 50 states, 13 countries, and six of the seven continents. But she wanted to see continent seven. Her hoped-for adventure was kindled in 2007 when she saw filmmaker Werner Herzog's *Encounters at the End of the World*.

Laura wanted to go to Antarctica.

Laura, darling, I don't know where you are. The divine Architect hasn't rolled out the Floor Plan. But wherever you are, I wish you safe travels.

I hope and pray that along your thrilling new adventure you move smoothly on soothing waves of good —- waves of joy, activity, friendship, and fun, and daydreams and dancing and TV reruns. Do you have TV, sweetheart? I'm going to rewatch "The Larry Sanders Show," all six seasons, because I've been watching the two-part HBO documentary *The Zen Diaries of Garry Shandling*, which I don't want to finish because it moves me so deeply and makes me think of you, how Garry, the famous comedian, revealed his inner life in his diaries just as you revealed your inner life in your diaries,

LIVE BRAVE

Do you have something to read? *The Grapes of Wrath*? Which we planned to read aloud but never did, if only we'd had more time, darling . . .

and Garry's lifelong struggle to cope with the unendurable loss of his older brother, Barry -- who died at the age of 13 when Garry was 10, a sibling loss that reminds me of you losing Terry -- how Garry pursued a conscious inner and outer quest, a quest shaped by his loss, a quest to overcome the tragedy of love through the comedy of work, a deep quest to *know thyself* and to be the best spiritual warrior you can be. A deep quest that you share. We share. And I just watched S1|E1 last night and laughed out loud, and I don't do a whole lot of laughing these days. I wish you were here so we could laugh together. Do you have something to read? *The Grapes of Wrath*? Which we planned to read aloud but never did, if only we'd had more time, darling . . . a novel I know you love because it reminds you of home, Oklahoma tenant farmers trapped in the Dust Bowl who escape to California, echoes of your journey, honey. How's life without *Science and Health* and the *Bible*? Or can you get your hands on those there? Do you have a theater where you can usher? By the way, in January 2018, Georgia and Joan and 17 of your other Broadway usher friends threw a party for you before the show at Circle in the Square Theater, where over the years you ushered for many shows, including *Lady Day at Emerson's Bar and Grill*, which ran from April 13 to October 5, 2014, and I think of that

LIVE BRAVE

Do you have somewhere to swim so you can put your pretty feet in the water?

show especially because you told me you cried your eyes out at the back of the theater every night because aesthetic emotion overwhelmed you as you listened to Audra McDonald channel Billie Holiday's "God Bless the Child." Pretty sweet of your usher gang to honor and celebrate you that way, right? Does your new Place have buildings? I hope so. That would be kind of important to me. And if you don't, where do you live? Outdoors, under the sky? You probably love that. But you know me, I don't camp. How about art? Do they have paintings there? You love paintings. And what about food? Can you get huckleberry licorice and enjoy memories of Yellowstone? Do you sleep? Do you wear clothes? Do you have a friend? *Have you run into anyone there that you knew here?* Like your mom? Or Terry? I sure hope so. Do they have ping-pong, basketball, and tennis in your new Digs? Do you have somebody to play those with now that you can't play them with me? What about toenail polish? And turtles? You gotta have turtles, honey. Did you find a place to get your hair done now that you can no longer get it done by your daughter, Shelaine? It isn't the same, I know. Tears, darling. Tears. Do you have somewhere to swim so you can put your pretty feet in the water and splash around as you picture swimming in our pool in Sacramento or the lake in Winslow, Arkansas, with your grandson, Elliott?

LIVE BRAVE

Whenever Ron plays “Everlasting arms of love” at a church service, he’ll be playing that hymn for you.

Do you have a porch you can sit on and someone to chew the fat with like you loved doing with Lee? Or girlfriends you can hang with like you loved hanging with your half sisters Brenda and Kylee or Mischelle and Melissa? Do you have Words with Friends and someone you can play that with now that you can no longer play with your niece, Sophie? Do you have someone who can make you avocado toast and soft boiled eggs like Paul? Or read to you like Pam? Or go on a trip with you like you went to Crater Lake last summer with Jenny? Or like you went to Africa many times with Lorna? Or like you traveled the world with Benedicta? Everybody misses you, sweetheart, too many names to mention, too many other family members and friends, and I apologize I'm leaving people out. But I will say that Robert feels lost without you. He and Jack can't believe that you won't see Jamie Rey grow up. Emily's having a hard time too. She really misses talking with you and getting advice from you and seeing how happy her dad was with you. She wishes the three of us could go over to the courts at Sac City and play tennis. But she calls me a lot and we help each other. Your half brother Kevin and his wife, Tonya, also help me. I get a spiritual text message from Kevin almost every day. And Ron said whenever he plays "Everlasting arms of love" at a church service, he'll be playing that hymn for you.

LIVE BRAVE

It was the song you and I danced to for our last dance. . . . I see your giddy smile and feel your joy pulsing through your body and your being as we held hands and sang along and swayed to the happy memories-filled beat.

Darling, do you have a “private garden”? Like in NYC? And someone to go with like your loyal friend Doug? Speaking of gardens, Lemon Tree has sprung back to life. Yep. LT still keeps me company in his planter right here on the porch, and I now count 15 lemons likely ready to pluck this December. Amazing, right? It’s a sign, honey. LT, barren the last time you saw him in November, no lemons to harvest this past December, now flourishes, and not only because of the delayed impact of your tender loving care and watering, but mainly because LT can still feel your nourishing spirit. Oh, and you know the avocado tree and fig tree that Maura got for you at Home Depot when she visited you here in November? I named the fig tree Astley, for our first favorite song (Rick Astley’s “Never Gonna Give You Up”) -- and what fun you and Elliott and I had dancing to that song all the time, right? And it was the song you and I danced to for our last dance. We danced sitting down, here in our living room in front of the fireplace, when Paul & John and Austin & Emily were here on Friday, November 24, 2017, the day after Thanksgiving. Remember? I can see how you lit up, see your giddy smile and feel your joy pulsing through your body and your being as we held hands and sang along and swayed to the happy memories-filled beat. And the other tree that Maura got, the avocado tree, I named Etheridge,

LIVE BRAVE

Do you see oceans and meadows and sunsets and stars? . . . I hope you have music? Because surely the kind and thoughtful divine Architect would provide music for you wherever you go.

for our last favorite song (Melissa Etheridge's "California"). Our anthem. And I gave the trees to our neighbors Ellen and Sam to plant in their yard because they have a natural green thumb and own their house, but I'm renting and don't want to leave them behind if I move, though I don't want to move without you. Sam planted Etheridge along the property line right outside our front door where I will easily see her everyday, and he planted Astley in their backyard. Astley & Etheridge are no substitute for you, my love, but I'll take every symbol I can get, and they will grow strong and bear fruit in your honor for years and years to come, sweetheart. And I can visit them for the rest of my life. And maybe our two trees will live on with meaning for others to appreciate long after I go. Do you see oceans and meadows and sunsets and stars? I think of you every night when I step outside my door and look up to see the North Star and Sirius and Orion. And when I look at the moon, I say, "Hi, darling." Because I know that moonlight is you. I know that just as the moon's reflected light comes from a source offstage, out of sight, you reflect light into my life even though you are now offstage, out of sight. I hope you have music? Because surely the kind and thoughtful divine Architect would provide music for you wherever you go. Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Sarah Vaughan



PUMPKIN PATCH KID

Maybe Laura's love of
pumpkins started here,
when she hopped
off her bike to wade
through a sea of
pumpkins and find the
biggest one of all.
Have you ever seen
anyone hug a pumpkin
more tenderly?
And talk about strong.
Look at her.
Tender and strong—
that's our Laura.

LIVE BRAVE

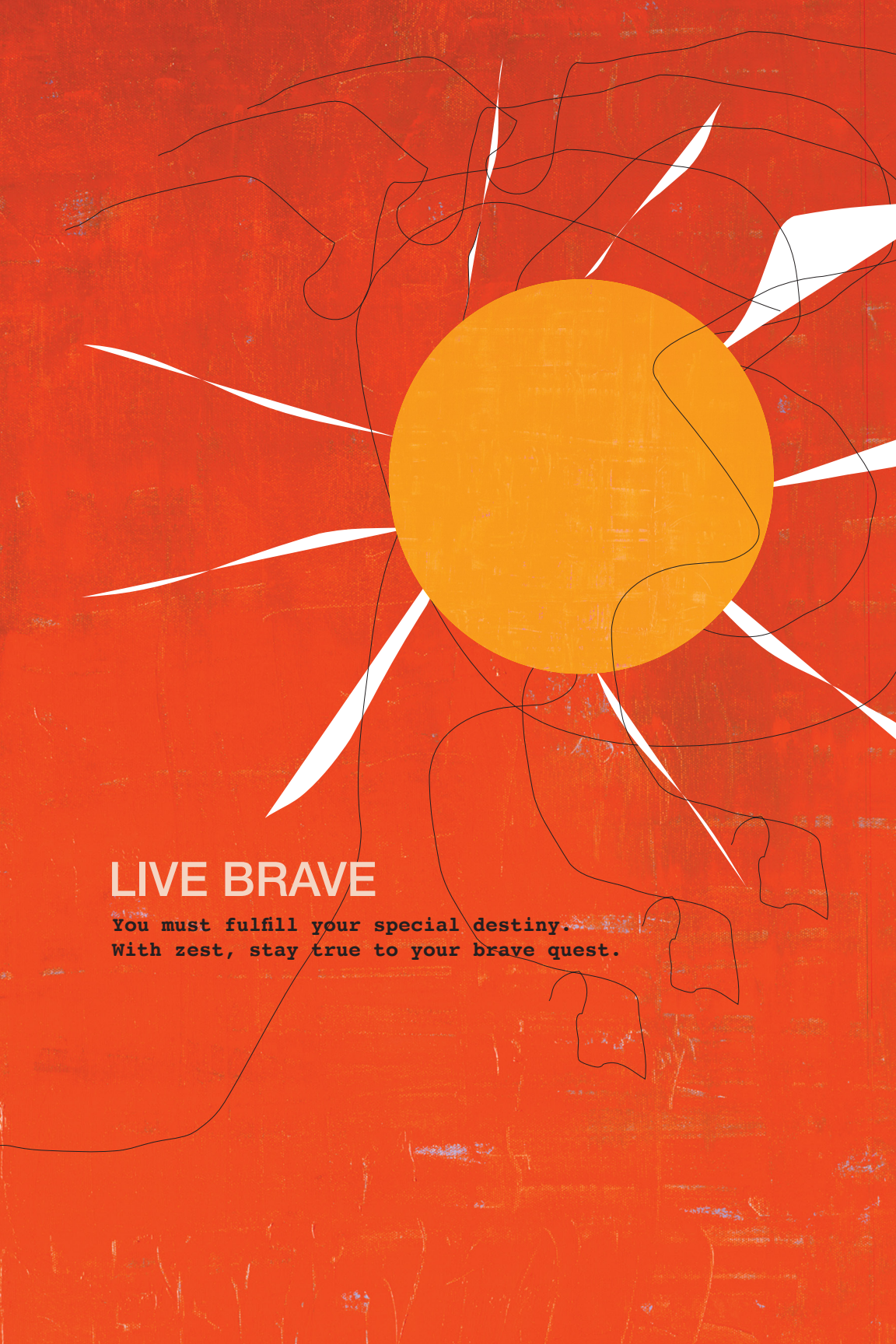
And what about movies? Do they have a way there for you to watch the movie your mom named you after: *Laura*? (Do they have pumpkins?)

-- have you found a jazz club where you can hear them? And Suede? Another artist you love so much -- do they have advanced technology there so you can import her recordings from Earth? Or enable you to hear “Seasons of Love”? “Betty Davis Eyes”? “The Very Thought of You”? “Don’t Leave Home”? I can’t listen to music, darling, because I go to pieces thinking about you. And what about movies? Do they have a way there for you to watch the movie your mom named you after: *Laura*? Or the movie with your favorite actor, Robert Redford, that we never got to watch together, though we tried a few times: *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*? I wish you could see *Coco*. Thank God I can see *Coco*. I hope you can at least see *Out of Africa* in your mind’s eye so Denys and Karen and their special world of Kenya and romance and adventure and literature remain vivid in your memory and heart.

INT. OFFICE OF THE ARCHITECT PAINTER PRESS - SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA - EASTER SUNDAY - APRIL 1, 2018 - CONTINUOUS IN TIME ... FIRST LIGHT

And on this Easter morning
as the sun begins to dawn . . .

I wish you health and abundant life,
eternal Laura Dawn.


LIVE BRAVE
You must fulfill your special destiny.
With zest, stay true to your brave quest.

I hope you find the “contemplative life” that you said was your goal to live here.

I hope you keep giving yourself the opportunity to write. Even if it doesn’t pay the bills.

And most of all, I wish you love.

And peace.

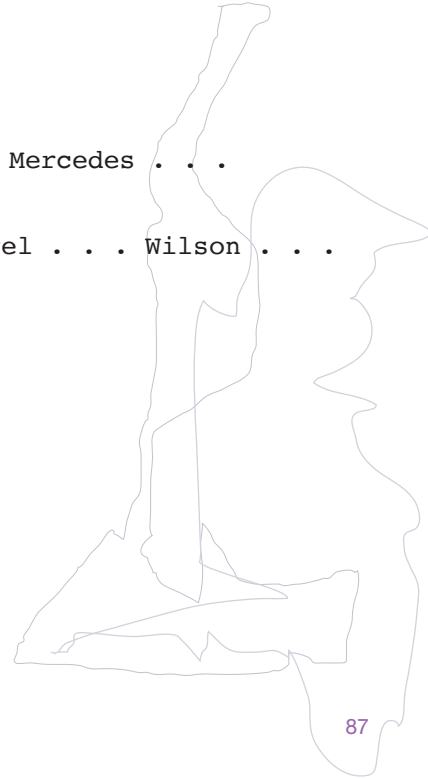
You must fulfill your special destiny.
With zest, stay true to your brave quest.

And whatever Room in this Cosmic House you now find yourself, I hope there’s an Antarctica.
And you get to go.

I wish I could go with you.

My dear sweet Nurse, Writer, Mercedes . . .

Baby Doll, Cupcake, Star Angel . . . Wilson . . .





THE BEAST AND THE BEAUTY. ME & LAURA, MAY 18, 2017. WORLD PEACE ROSE GARDEN, CAPITAL PARK, SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA. LAURA WEARS MY MAGENTA LACOSTE SHIRT, WHICH SHE WORE ALL THE TIME.

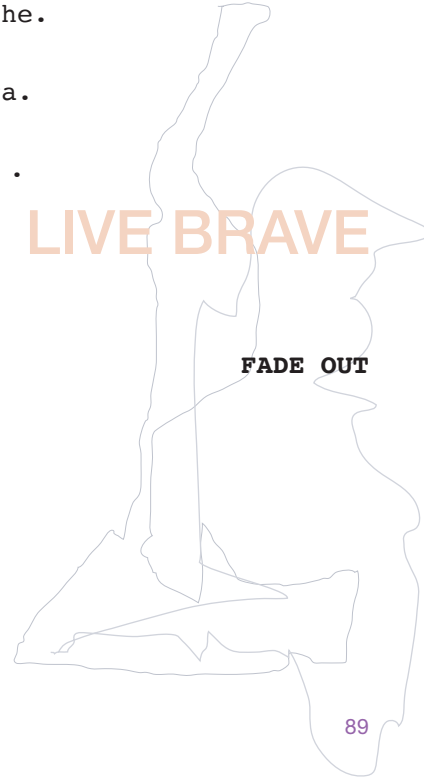
They say life isn't measured by the number of breaths we take but by the moments that take our breath away.

Laura took my breath away. Over and over. Now she's gone. And I can hardly breathe.

I will always love you, Laura.

Ride on, brave Pony Girl . . .

Ride on . . .



FADE OUT



“Laura Dawn Middleton: Room 5, Sea Ranch Lodge | View Of Bihler Point,” 04.26.2017 8:06 pm

LAURA DAWN MIDDLETON | TWILIGHT HORIZONS. The Sea Ranch, CA, April 26, 2017. Here in Room 5 at Sea Ranch Lodge, our favorite place to go, Laura gazes through our window to the view at dusk of the Pacific Ocean and craggy grass covered Bihler Point, which juts out high above the surf. Always our ultimate destination, Bihler Point beckoned us time and again from Sacramento, and we would trek to the edge of the cliff then sit bundled up from head to toe on Our Rock: the concrete elliptic cylinder with an oxidized-bronze “1876 Bihler Point” Geodetic Survey Marker. And we would thrill to the roar of the ocean . . . and brave the wind . . . and hold hands and pray . . . hug each other tight . . . and listen . . . listen . . . listen . . . and hope.



We bring to our grief the architecture of ourselves.



Slate 7

LIVE BRAVE

Postscript to "Live Brave"

Over the years, I relied on Laura to proofread some of my books. Her "A" student mentality, diligence, and exceptional writing skills equipped her to do this. I truly admire, for example, the craft and spiritual perspicacity that shine through an article that she published in 1993 in the *Christian Science Sentinel*, "William Tell and the empty hat." And while her insights in that article about the laws of Spirit proved too advanced for either of us to successfully apply to her misfortune, I still hold to these laws, though not without lots of soul-searching and doubling down on the intensity of my *Quest* for rational answers to basic *Questions* about human existence and the Schematic Design of the Architecture of Life.

I may have to settle for "the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding": peace that surpasses my human understanding of Laura's passing. Where she went. Why. One way or another, I'm hoping someday my hat in life about all of this will somehow feel more full than empty.

But I'd sure like to interview the Architect.

Laura also displays her gifted W.I.Q. (Writing Intelligence Quotient) in the raw honesty of her gritty last journal entry, which she penned as summer waned in 2017 and wanted me to post if she passed. She writes about her grueling climb up the mountain of adversity, hoping to reach the summit of health, and she doesn't sugarcoat her struggle. She writes from her heart. She writes the truth.

In her short essay, Laura refers to Meru, a mountain in the Garhwal Himalayas in Northern India that soars over 20,000 feet. The Hindus believe that Meru is the center of the universe. And during her ordeal, Meru stood at the symbolic center of Laura's universe.

Laura and I first learned about Mount Meru and the iconic feature of its central peak, the Shark's Fin, a steep, treacherous granite wall that has attracted and frustrated elite climbing teams for decades, when we went to the Tower Theater, in Sacramento, California, in 2015 and saw the documentary *Meru*. The symbolic lessons of that inspiring movie stayed with us. And so did the haunting melody and lyrics of the song that runs as the credits roll at the end of the movie. Andra Day sings, "The Light That Never Fails."

Plus, Laura had a remarkably sharp eye for details. "Hey, Details Girl," I would say when I needed her help. I credit Laura as copyeditor for my books *Metaphysical Warrior*, *Misfitz Because*, and *Henry Trucks — Painter*. In that last book, I also write a special line of tribute to Laura.

Laura was going to proofread my latest book, *Visual Ef9ects*, but that didn't work out. She never even got to see the book. Fortunately, she did know

that I would dedicate it to her. But she didn't know that I would refer to her throughout the book, including through special artwork like "DREAM HOUSE | Composition for Laura," which I include on pages 102–103 here in *Live Brave*.



LAURA WEARS MY HAT THAT SAYS, "WRITER." NYC, 2016

Laura also didn't know that I would dedicate to her the fifth edition of my book *Picasso Lessons*. Which would please her very much—especially because I include in my dedication lines from the beautiful card that Laura sent me about *Picasso Lessons* after she saw the first edition when it was published in 2007. Laura's note to me in full, which she penned in her lyrical handwriting, reads as follows: "April 2007. Jef7rey — At long last I am in receipt of your beautiful book. (And I have a few to share!) I love the bold colors and bright insights. It gives the impression that if one sat down with you a few times you could easily explain all the mysteries of the world. Using only a ruler and a pen. I will not pretend I get it all from one cursory reading but I do like being primed to see the painting anew and with fresh and previously unexplored vantage points. Illuminating! Thanks for being in my world. L."

Thanks for being in my world, darling.

But including in *Picasso Lessons* selective lines from Laura's note to me also makes me very sad because, in a way (and I hope you'll excuse me for being blunt), so what, Laura's not here. Yes, she's here in spirit, she's here in my heart, but that isn't anywhere near the same. Only her card is really here. And it rests on my desk next to me as I write this.

So as I bury myself in my work to deal with my grief, I look for every way I can to include Laura in what I'm doing, to fold our love into my work. I seek to honor Laura by staying true to the progressive realization of our shared ideal—namely, abundance that flows from the Gold Coin of Human Happiness: Work & Love, minted in the Treasury of Truth.

So I'll take the dedications. I'll invest every dedication and tribute with all my heart. Including this tribute. I'll weave our love story through everything I create to keep Laura by my side. I hear her encouraging me, "Darling, just do it. Don't worry about what anyone else thinks."

Think Brave.

LIVE BRAVE

Create Brave.

Do It. Do It All . . .

And Do It Brave.

So it means the world to me to feel that as long as books and art exist, Laura will live on in these special ways. And we will live on together . . . till the end of time.

Through my tears, I hear Laura assuring me what lyricists Robert Lopez & Kristen Anderson-Lopez express so beautifully in the movie *Coco* through their song "Remember Me"—

Remember me
Though I have to say goodbye
Remember me
Don't let it make you cry
For even if I'm far away I hold you in my heart
I sing a secret song to you each night we are apart

Remember me
Though I have to travel far
Remember me
Each time you hear a sad guitar
Know that I'm with you the only way that I can be
Until you're in my arms again
Remember me





THE LAWN >
The name of this painting under the photo, one of my paintings that Laura especially loved.

Online Links for "Live Brave"

In the Facebook post, I include links throughout the tribute that take you to very special Laura places. You can't just click on those links here in this book, so I list them online: archive.org/details/LiveBraveLauraMiddleton

And if you go to this link, archive.org/details/LiveBraveTrailer, you can hear me read the intro to "Live Brave." I feature a few of Laura's photos on her blog "Barefoot Travels," which will take you to "TRAVELAUR"—Laura's play on words, expressing her identity. Just add an "a" to the end:

TRAVELAURA.

YES, TRAVEL LAURA.

TRAVEL ON, MY LOVE . . .

LIVE BRAVE

"Since happiness is most often met by those who have learned to live in every moment of the present, none has such prodigal opportunities of attaining that art as the traveller. . . . So long as he loses all consciousness of self and is aware in all his senses of the present scene, almost any part of the world is as good as another. Mountain or desert, it is all one."

—Tom Longstaff, *This My Voyage*

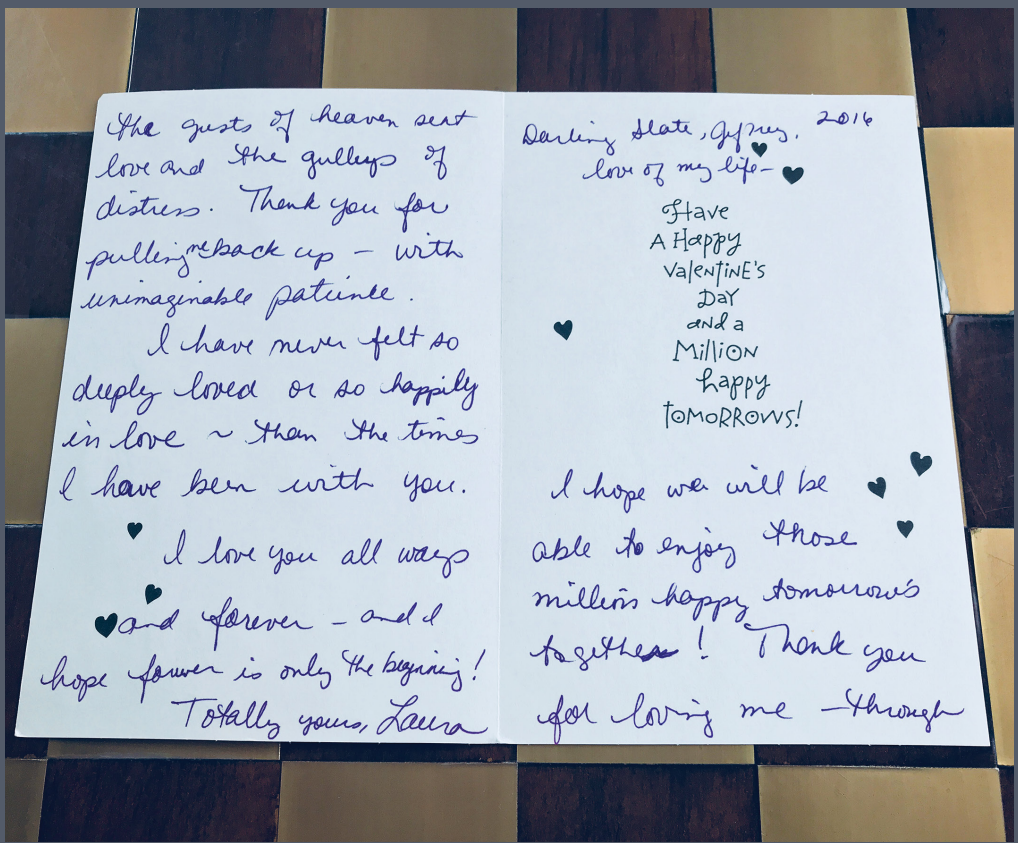
Laura knew how to live in the moment of the present more than anyone I know, and she radiated happiness. Thanks to Tom Longstaff, I now see how Laura's art of living in the present reflected her art of travel and vice versa. So I'm sure that wherever Laura now travels, mountain or desert or a galaxy far, far away, "it is all one" . . . and surely she continues "to live in every moment of the present."



Laura living in the moment of the present at my daughter Emily's apartment in Silver Lake, Los Angeles, California. June 24, 2017, two days before Laura and I and her grandson, Elliott, went to Universal Studios and had the time of our lives.

"I was in heaven . . . with the wind in my face and freezing waves crashing over the bow and into my hair." —Laura Middleton

Travelaura: Stonington, Maine. May 25, 2010



The gusts of heaven sent love and the gulleys of distress. Thank you for pulling me back up — with unimaginable patience.

I have never felt so deeply loved or so happily in love ~ than the times I have been with you.

I love you all ways and forever — and I hope forever is only the beginning!

Totally yours, Laura

Darling Slate, Jeffrey. 2016
love of my life-

Have
A Happy
Valentine's
Day
and a
Million
happy
tomorrows!

I hope we will be able to enjoy those million happy tomorrow's together! Thank you for loving me through

"Friendship transcends disappearance: an enduring friendship goes on after death, the exchange only transmuted by absence, the relationship advancing and maturing in a silent internal conversational way even after one half of the bond has passed on."

—David Whyte, *Consolations*

LOVE NEVER ENDS.
FRIENDSHIP NEVER ENDS.

NOW IN OUR 36TH YEAR, IN SPACESHIP EARTH TIME,
LAURA & MY FRIENDSHIP GOES ON,
CONTINUING TO ADVANCE AND MATURE AND DEEPEN—
AND WILL DO SO THROUGHOUT ETERNITY.
BECAUSE OUR "FRIENDSHIP TRANSCENDS DISAPPEARANCE."

THANK YOU, DAVID WHYTE—ONE OF LAURA'S FAVORITE WRITERS. THANK YOU, FOR YOUR BEAUTIFUL AND STUNNING CLAIRVOYANT PERSPECTIVE.



1987 | Princeton, New Jersey



Jef7rey & Laura — 2017 | Sacramento, California





THE BEAST AND THE BEAUTY MAY 18, 2017. WORLD PEACE ROSE GARDEN, CAPITAL PARK, SACRAMENTO, CA. LAURA WEARS MY MAGENTA LACOSTE SHIRT, WHICH SHE WORE ALL THE TIME.

THE DAEDALUS PROJECT: THE HERO'S JOURNEY HOUSE

DREAM HOUSE | Composition For Laura

here is the deepest secret nobody knows

(here is the root of the root and the bud of the bud

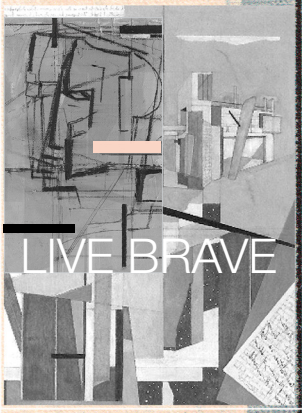
and the sky of the sky of a tree called life; which grows

higher than soul can hope or mind can hide)

and this is the wonder that's keeping the stars apart

i carry your heart (i carry it in my heart)

— e e cummings | 1952



Love, Slate

LAURA LAURA LAURA LAUR

DREAM HOUSE | COMPOSITION FOR LAURA

Earth Arrival Day 11.27.63
Earth Departure Day 11.29.17

East of the sun and west of the moon / We'll build a dream house . . .
—Brooks Bowman
Princeton, 1934



Thank you for loving me, darling

Where are you?
The Architect hasn't rolled out the Floor Plan

What Room in this Cosmic House did you enter?

We hoped someday we would build our Dream House. Where we would stay young together and live for the rest of our lives.

OUR ROCK, BIHLER POINT | THE SEA RANCH, CALIFORNIA

I really miss you
I can't wait to see you again, my love

THE HOUSE OF THE HUMAN FACE

For even if I'm far away,
I hold you in my heart.
I sing a secret song to you
each night we are apart.
REMEMBER ME.
—"Remember Me"
by lyricists Robert Lopez & Kristen Anderson-Lopez

METAPHYSICAL WARRIOR
THE SILVER KNIGHT

MY NORTH STAR

KnightHeadQuarters

TEXT TO LAURA 01.28.18 | HUMAN NEED: MOONLIGHT HALO —SYMBOLIC SOLACE

darling, i feel you with me and hope you feel me with you . . .
bc i plan to get together again
and this time let nothing come between us
nothing
ever

btw a once every 150 year event on wednesday: a blue moon
and right after last night's special moon experience . . .
about which i wrote

i just went outside . . .
to catch my breath
get some peace
some moments of tranquility

and i looked up as i always do to see orion—
the 7 main stars, including the diagonal twins, upper left and lower right, betelgeuse and rigel—
and orion's dog, sirius, the brightest star in the night sky

orion and sirius calm me and orient me
seriously
connect me somehow in my mind and heart to a place and time beyond place and time
and also at the same time, connect me to the here and now . . .
and yesterday
to humarock where you and benny and elliott visited me
one late spring day in 2012 . . .
and where night after night i watched orion come up out of the atlantic
from the horizon and swivel up and around to the south

when i find orion, his belt stars too, i guess i surrender
and tonight i saw something i don't recall ever seeing before . . .
a murky clouded orion tough to see,
but a giant ring around the moon, a huge-diameter halo around the moon . . .
right above BEVHQ, right above my head
somehow feels so symbolic, makes me feel connected to you
you are moonlight . . . the light of the moon:

sunlight

and we can see the sun—see the sunlight—even though the sun is offstage . . .
out of sight
like you, my love

out of sight
but shining so bright
through my weary dark night . . .

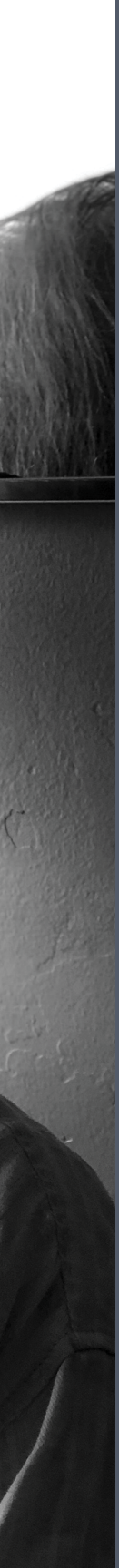
"Let everything happen to you: Beauty and terror.
Just keep going. No feeling is final."

—Rainer Maria Rilke, *Book of Hours* I, 59

"Grief, I've learned, is really love. It's all the love you want to give but cannot give. The more you loved someone, the more you grieve. . . . Grief is just love with no place to go."

—Jamie Anderson, "As the lights wink out . . ."





TEXT WITH FRIEND 07.15.18 — after I sent them this photo . . .

FRIEND: Hope you're having a nice time

ME: Doing the best I can . . . folks getting a kick out of my Walt Whitman look . . .
Laura's truelove in disguise

FRIEND: Do you like the way you look?
Do you say what a handsome dude when you look in the mirror?

ME: i say there's a man mourning the loss of his truelove
his outer look a reflection of his inner pain
his sadness . . .
his broken heart . . .

he looks awful on the outside,
but he feels worse on the inside

he doesn't care what he looks like
he cares what he feels like
and enjoys being fitfully costumed for his current role on the stage of life
in this earthly theater of the absurd
in the unfolding drama of human experience

he chooses to honor the human condition
honor the magnitude of his lost love's life . . .
by not being himself for a while
and mourning her mysterious departure

and at the same time, paradoxically, i see a man who's never been more
himself than now
his authentic self,
never being truer to his darling Laura than now:
honoring her expectation that he will, if anyone will, look deep inside and ask
lots of Questions along his soul-searching Quest . . .

a Quest against all odds to step through the open door that reveals the Floor
Plan of the Architecture of Reality

i see a man whose look is honest
a picture of truth

i'll shave again someday,
i'll hit the reset button and clean up good
but i'm devoting one sacred year to Laura's passing . . .
one year to celebrate Good Grief . . .
as i like to call it
to feel it fully,
connect deeply at every level and in every way
to the impact of a human being's exit from Spaceship Earth—
Laura Middleton's untimely exit from Spaceship Earth . . .

so as to my shipwrecked look . . .
suffer it to be so now

[But what you see in blue? That's what I didn't send, thankful for my friend's caring question, which got my wheels turning. I simply texted back, "lol . . . nope, i don't."]

JULY 5, 2018, GARRETT'S OLD FASHIONED RESTAURANT, SANTA BARBARA, CALIFORNIA
PHOTO BY MY DAUGHTER, EMILY HILDNER

GRIEVE BRAVE

WE BRING TO OUR GRIEF THE ARCHITECTURE OF OURSELVES.

"Continuing to show up, continuing to look for support inside your pain, when all the world tries to tell you it's a problem, is an act of fierce self-love and tenacity. Grief is not a sign that you're unwell or unevolved. It's a sign that love has been part of your life, and that you want love to continue, even here. You are here now, and here sucks."

—Megan Devine, *It's OK That You're Not OK*

GOOD GRIEF—THE LAURA EFFECT

Laura brought me face to face for the first time with the sting of death. The utter agony of losing the woman you love.

We hoped someday we would build our Dream House. Where we would stay young together and live for the rest of our lives.

And I will never be the same because of this ordeal. Laura's ordeal. My ordeal. Our ordeal.

Four months after writing "Live Brave," my soul-searching, heart-searing quest continues. I miss Laura the same now as the day she left. I miss her hands, her smile, her eyes, her voice. Laura's face. I live with both sides of the coin of pain, a coin minted especially for the likes of me. I live not only with the emotional pain and tangible reality of Laura's absence—we will never see each other again during my human experience. I also live with the existential pain, the spiritual pain, of knowing that I brought a fire extinguisher of prayer and hope to the inferno of disease and death. You can't imagine how naive and crushed I feel by my failure to save Laura through prayer.

I feel forsaken.

But then I'm in good company. In his darkest hours, the psalmist David sometimes felt at least momentarily abandoned by God: "How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord? how long shall mine enemy be exalted over me? (Psalms 13:1,2). Job's troubles were so great that he thought God might even kill him (Job 13:15). And I can only imagine how abandoned Joseph felt getting kicked out his house by his own family who then sold him into slavery. Even Jesus, when the stakes were highest, even Jesus felt forsaken. He cried out from the cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46).

And at the same time, I feel that my honest reckoning with my feelings—my disappointment in myself and my disappointment in God, my anger at God's unmerciful impotence (my daring to speak truth to power, to lash out at the divine Spirit, divine Love, Life, to let God have it, as my role models in the Bible sometimes did)—represents a stage of my development that can't be skipped over in the chess game of human life. When you play chess, you can't checkmate your opponent's king in one move. To win the crown in the game of chess, you have to methodically go move by move, progressively realizing the worthy ideal of victory. You can start with victory in mind, but you still have to play move by move. Likewise, there are no shortcuts to the victory of wisdom, insight, empathy, and increased capacities in the chess game of human life.

So I'm good with the truth of how I feel about Laura's harsh and premature passing. I feel mad and sad. But I feel that my forthright, humble, and complicated anger and sorrow—my search for clarity and

answers to questions about life and death and my relationship to God, Laura's relationship to Life, somehow all of this paves the way forward to a time and place where, by some miracle, like David, Job, Joseph, and Jesus, and countless other people throughout time, including people in the Bible and people not in the Bible, I will somehow no longer feel forsaken. The assurance of the Bible will somehow ring true: "God has said, 'Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you'" (Hebrews 13:5). Or Laura.

I'm on the road of the classic journey, the individual hero's journey through the labyrinth of the human condition, a journey of transformation.

We set out on some adventure, often reluctantly, one way. And we return home an entirely different way. We change. We are not the same people at the end of the trip we were at the beginning. That holds true when we travel through our outer world to a different place, to Yellowstone, Tahoe, or Sea Ranch, or to a different space, to a museum, theater, or church. And that holds true when we go nowhere in the outer world and simply travel inside ourselves—travel through our inner world, make an inner journey, emotionally, psychological, spiritually. Like the journey I'm on because of losing Laura.

The military has a name for the trauma of transformation that can sometimes send a person reeling and shock them out of the person they were before battle into a new person, a troubled shadow of their former self, after battle: PTS, Post-Traumatic Stress. But as I learned some years back, by watching Jane McGonigal's terrific TED Talk, "The game that can give you 10 extra years of life," PTS can become PTG,

Post Traumatic Growth. Right now, I find myself somewhere along the path that zigzags from the valley of PTS to the mountaintop of PTG.

And writing this book helps me climb higher. Creating this book to honor Laura helps me zigzag a little farther out of the valley. I see my passionate outer physical creativity and my intense inner spiritual activity since Laura's passing as a healthy PTG-expression of my grief.

Good Grief.

Even as I mourn, I choose not to be a victim, but a creator. I keep creating in all kinds of offbeat, but authentic ways, including recreating how I look. I don't shave. I haven't shaved since Laura left. And we're now heading into month nine. I wear black. I wear her shirts. I wear my shirts that she loved to wear. I wear her perfume. I plan to do strange things like this for one year. After that? I don't know. I trust more will be revealed. I trust the ancient, Bible-parallel wisdom penned by Virgil in *The Aeneid*, "Your road to safety will open first from where you least expect it."

I live in a world of symbols. Everything I do has symbolic value. Including what I create. So I just keep creating ways to symbolize my eternal love for Laura. Ways that make me feel her presence. Ways that symbolize my rite of passage through the transforming, strengthening stages of grief.

My grief counselor, Don, says studies show that the average time it takes for someone to move through grief to some plateau where they can more fully move on with their lives turns out to be four years. Like college.

I'm only half way through my second semester of my first year in Grief University. Misery University. (Satellite schools within the larger school system of the human condition, Adversity University, from which no one graduates.) I'm fine if it takes four years to get my diploma. I've learned a lot so far. About myself. About others. And I've got a lot more to learn. What's the rush?

Right now, I feel in alignment with my being, my worldview, my sense of the gravity of this tragic event, this horrible rupture in the fabric of my human life, not to mention Laura's human life, my sorrow. I choose to honor Laura and the magnitude and depth of her life and the magnitude and significance of her passing by mourning for a symbolic interval of time. So what if I look like Walt Whitman?

What's one year in the big picture? Or four? Or two? I now get why architect Buckminster Fuller took a vow of silence for two years, speaking to no one except his wife and daughter. It was his way of emotionally processing, if not also symbolically honoring, the dramatic turning point in his life: He stood on the shore of Lake Michigan planning to walk into the water and drown, but then chose not to do so. I choose not to drown too. But like Fuller, I also choose to honor this dramatic turning point in my life in ways authentic and meaningful to me. When we usher someone into this world, we honor them, ourselves, and life itself, by making the nine months leading to their arrival sacred. I choose to honor someone's mortal death the same way we honor their mortal birth. I believe that Laura lives. As I see it—my guess, my hope—Laura lived before human birth. She lives after human death. I choose to treat her Earth Arrival and Earth Departure in equally sacred ways.

This standpoint—my choosing to give equal symbolic, emotional, and time-frame value to Laura after her sacred departure from this world as her parents and their family and friends gave Laura during the nine months of pregnancy before her sacred arrival into this world—gives you an example of just one of the many things I now can see about the human condition that I couldn't see until I was forced by Laura's passing to reluctantly set out on my Laura-inspired journey. Thanks to Laura's friend Navaz, with whom I've talked a lot about this, I have a name for these insights, a name for the influence of wisdom and keener perception that has come to assist me and shape the choices I might not otherwise make were it not for my PTG journey through catastrophe.

The Laura Effect.

The Laura Effect of Good Grief. Which is to say, grief that, at least for me, rises from the depths of my being, both humanly and spiritually. Grief that comes not to menace me and destroy me but to inspire me and restore me. Grief that rises phoenix-like out of the ashes of my despair and heartbreak and befuddlement, my anger, to teach me lessons I could not have learned otherwise and would give anything for Laura to still be here so I wouldn't have to learn them. Lessons that I can pass along to others. On behalf of Laura. To honor her fierce idealist mentality and her Good Samaritan, Florence Nightingale humanitarian service-to-others heart. Her hope that her death, no less than her life, could somehow prove significant.

"Jeffrey," Navaz said to me recently, "I never thought that by helping you through your grief over Laura that I would be helped in return, that our

conversations about Laura and our mutual grief would help me and my family, including my dad, make choices during the last days of my mom's life we wouldn't have made otherwise, and help me now face my grief over mom's passing." The Laura Effect.

The word *grief* means "deep and poignant distress caused by or as if by bereavement." The word comes from Middle English *gref*, from Anglo-French *gref*, meaning injustice, calamity. Grief is the feeling of deep and poignant distress caused by the recognition of injustice and calamity. If you were to look through the telescope of my worldview, you would see that grief, I'm learning, is a shining star in the night sky of our deepest humanity. Grief reflects our highest, most spiritually-based capacity to honor and feel the gravity and magnitude of our disappointment in the Principle that we count on to reign supreme in human experience and prevent injustice and calamity, the Principle that we expect to prevail against death's opposite: Life.

Anger colors my grief because I feel betrayed—that Principle let me and Laura down. Writer Elizabeth Watson helps me feel OK about my anger. She learned from her mother, I believe, "that grief is a time to be lived through, experienced fully, and that the heavens will not fail if I give voice to my anger against God in such a time."

Jesus got angry. He got so angry that he physically upturned a table in a public space, the table of the money-changers who were ripping people off. Well, I'm upturning the table of the money-changers inside, emotionally, in my soul. I'm angry because I feel that Laura and I got ripped off. And that strikes me as a reasonable response. I figure if anger

was OK for Jesus then it's OK for the likes of me too. Jesus showed us that anger can be positive, healthy, and necessary to reveal sometimes, especially when we must bravely mount righteous rebellion against unrighteous authority. Jesus may well have taught us to rejoice, but I look to his example, what he did, and the Bible reports at least some of the times when he wasn't all that happy.

What is anger?

St. Augustine said that Anger is one of the two daughters of Hope. Hope's other daughter? Courage. Mother Hope relies on her daughter Anger to stir in our hearts when we recognize that things aren't OK, but could be, ought to be—and Mother Hope relies on daughter Courage to rise within us and do something about it. That's why Jesus turned over that table. He was angry that injustice and calamity wielded the upper hand, and he had the courage to do something about it. Something symbolic. But also something dramatic, drastic, and practical. He didn't take evil lying down. Or simply say that it isn't real. He railed against evil. He called out the purveyors of injustice and calamity, the Sadducees and Pharisees and blind guides of the human condition, and put them down. And he did what he did to inspire us to do the same.

Reinhold Niebuhr's "Serenity Prayer" says, "God, give me grace to accept with serenity the things that cannot be changed, Courage to change the things which should be changed, and the Wisdom to distinguish the one from the other." Grace, Courage, and Wisdom I don't yet claim to have when it comes to the injustice and calamity of Laura's demise.

For me, Dylan Thomas saw it right. Felt it right.

> "Do not go gentle into that good night,
> Old age should burn and rave at close of day;
> Rage, rage against the dying of the light."

I rage that Laura and I raged as best we could against the dying of her light, but to no avail.

For many people, according to their worldview, death is a friend. That makes it a little easier, though I presume no less emotionally painful, for people to theologically accept the death of their truelove. If we believe that our loved one goes to heaven or gets promoted to glory (as the Salvation Army puts it), or gets reincarnated, if we believe it's God's will, well, then I suppose we might well pray for the grace to accept with serenity our loved one's fate. If we accept what Walt Whitman conjectured about death, maybe this softens the blow: "All goes outward and onward, nothing collapses, And to die is different from what any one supposes, and luckier." I hesitate on the "and luckier" part, but I buy the rest of it. But I'm not looking for guesses or reassurances about the afterlife. I'm looking for answers about this life. And besides, that "and luckier" tag conforms to the view that somehow death is our friend, or at least not our enemy. But I have a different worldview.

I share the worldview of Mary Baker Eddy, author of *Science and Health*, who crystallized the message of the Bible and Jesus's words and works and proclaimed that death isn't our friend. Our only friend is Life. Life is God. Jesus demonstrated this truth. After what we call death, he brought himself back. He brought Lazarus back. By so doing, he showed us

that we don't die. But he also showed us that even though we live on eternally, we have the potential to prove ourselves spiritually empowered victors over disease and death on the human plane. We can stay.

I still cannot grasp the bewildering circumstances of Laura's passing, missteps, regrets, and calamity I can't talk about yet. But I will continue, in Laura's honor, to question and rage against the dying of her human light and hope that more will be revealed about the architecture of this crazy fight.

Sir Isaac Newton said gravity was mystery; God created gravity. Case closed. And pretty much everyone accepted that, except a brave patent clerk with no university affiliation who dared to question Newton's conclusion. Dared to entertain the notion that Newton might be wrong. Dared to conjecture that Newton's two-liner about gravity—it's a mystery and God created it—sold gravity short. Came nowhere near the truth, nowhere near spelling out correctly, let alone in any respectable detail and depth, the actual construction documents that reveal the reality of the design of gravity. The floor plan of gravity. Einstein's brave question led him to brave answers, which he published in 1915 in his General Theory of Relativity. Einstein's wisdom to know the difference between acceptance and courage, brought the kind of serenity—truth—that transformed the world.

I don't think it takes an Einstein to dare to suggest that the answers about the far larger and grave problem I'm talking about here aren't yet all in. No one has yet drawn the Floor Plan of Reality. No one has yet spelled out correctly and clearly, let alone in detail and depth—at even the level required

for the construction documents for a one-bedroom human house—the Floor Plan of our Immortal House. Including how human birth and death—and memory—fit into this Plan. Assuming life has no beginning and no end, as I myself assume, no one has yet made sense of our total amnesia about ourselves and others before this human experience, let alone where exactly we were before we showed up here.

So I grieve. Because Laura isn't here. And I don't know where she is
. . . and if I will see her again
. . . and if we will remember each other
. . . and why she can't come back.
Why can't we freely circulate up and down the stairs, from one Room to another Room, through the House of Life?

I chalk up all of these reflections and questions to The Laura Effect.

Good Grief.

.

The Ancient Greeks said, "Grieve for no one." Maybe they're right. The advice goes hand in hand with Whitman's idealized vision thousands of years later of the nature of death. But then again, the ancient Greeks also told men, "Rule your wife." They got that wrong, so maybe they got "Grieve for no one" wrong too. No matter what happens to someone afterward, their departure from this human world at the age of 54, struck down by disease, like Laura, amounts to injustice and calamity. And on

the off chance that death turns out to be “luckier” than we imagine for the one who leaves, as Whitman conjectures, death sure isn’t a lucky break for the loved ones left behind. So I say, Grieve for everyone. Grieve for yourself. Grieve for the priceless someone you love but lost. Good Grief is healthy, honorable, inspired. At least for me. But maybe what Thornton Wilder said works better for you: “The highest tribute to the dead is not grief but gratitude.” Maybe. On the other hand, I think that I can be grateful and sad at the same time, soul search, rage, grieve, and thank my lucky stars for Laura at the same time, and feel confident that Laura would feel that my mix of grief and gratitude represents my most authentic self and my deepest true love for her, and she would consider anything else as lower on the ladder of my highest tribute.

I’m a work in progress, still bellying along the learning curve of grief. But I have learned three things that I could pass along to you.

1. Everyone grieves in their own way. You have to do it your way.

THERE. IS. NO. RIGHT. OR. WRONG. WAY. TO GRIEVE.
THERE. IS. ONLY. YOUR. WAY.

Your way is the right way for you, and don’t let anyone tell you otherwise. We’re all different. We all have a different emotional motherboard. We have different worldviews. We have different life experiences. We all find ourselves somewhere along a spectrum that runs from impervious to grief to all in. And it all comes down to some unique convergence between who we are and who we’ve lost. And when you lose them, and when in their life they go. And depending on how you’re wired, you will

either grieve little at all or as if the cosmos has ripped out your heart.
In the early 20th century, the Russian literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin said, “We bring to our projects the architecture of ourselves.” So I credit Bakhtin when I say the following.

We bring to our grief the architecture of ourselves.

Grief is a piano. A piano has 88 keys. Depending on who you are and who you lose, you will play your unique set of black keys and white keys in your heart and soul. You may play one key or none. You may play a triad of white keys: middle C, E, and G. You may add a flat 7th. Given who I am, my worldview, the architecture of myself and the significance of Laura in my life? I play all 88 keys. I feel all 88. All 88 keys on the concert grand piano of my mind and soul and heart. And I’m good with that. Because I know myself. I choose to grieve. And I’m grieving my way. Along my journey. My quest.

It may take strength and courage to not grieve. But it takes just as much strength and courage to grieve. And it takes even more to grieve your way because some people belittle grief. They slough it off. Not only for themselves but oddly enough somehow for you too. But these non-grievers may never have faced the test of their mortality and spirituality that I have faced and countless others have faced whose losses are more tragic than mine. The first line of F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby* comes to mind. Fitzgerald offers good advice about how I could feel kind toward those who roll their eyes or don’t support how I choose to grieve, and good advice as well for those less affected by grief who may be tempted to be impatient with and criticize those of us who do

grieve, and grieve deeply, maybe even eccentrically: “In my younger and more vulnerable years my father gave me some advice that I’ve been turning over in my mind ever since. ‘Whenever you feel like criticizing any one,’ he told me, ‘just remember that all the people in this world haven’t had the advantages that you’ve had.’”

2. Support how other people grieve or don’t grieve, especially if their choices differ from your choices.

Lead with your heart, not your head, with your humanity, not your theology. For many of us, the confidence that the person we’ve lost still lives, that spiritual reality, has little emotional or rational connection to the human reality that our loved one isn’t here any more. An intellectual or theological point of view doesn’t close the gap we feel between life as we knew it when the person was here and life as it has terribly become with them not here. Affirmations about spiritual reality, the afterlife, and eternity only comfort many of us so much—remember, we’re facing the brutal human reality that the person who is everything to us, who we love and loves us, *is no longer here and isn’t coming back*.

3. Honor what your departed loved one saw in you, loved about you, and counted on you to do. And make sure you keep doing it.

For me, that includes pondering the world through my art and books.

I feel Spirit advancing the canvas of my life all at once. The canvas of work and love now includes my vision of an architectural memorial for Laura, which I write about in the next chapter. The canvas also includes my

evolving sense that Laura expects me to someday continue our project: the progressive realization of the worthy ideal of experiencing how divine Love meets the human need of happiness through a fulfilling and balanced blend of work and love, even though that would mean my being with another woman. But then Laura told me she wanted me to love again.

I take it day by day. Books help. Like *Option B*, by Sheryl Sandberg and Adam Grant, and *Healing After Loss*, by Martha Whitmore Hickman. Poems help, like "The Unbroken," by Rashani Réa. People help. Like my family, friends, my bereavement circle and our counselor, and my bus driver, Gina, one of the few people in Sacramento who knows Laura. Gina loves to talk about Laura and recall the Monday, Wednesday, and Friday afternoons when Laura and I routinely hopped the 2:37 p.m. bus at the corner of Riverside and Beverly to go to the pool.

I feel like I'm swimming against the tide, but swimming forward for the most part, even as waves crash over me and the tide tries to take me under. I feel resistance to my strokes as I press on through the ocean of sadness. But I keep swimming, somehow keeping my head above the water. Somehow not drowning. Hoping to see ongoing signs in my life and in the lives of others of The Laura Effect.

I'm writing this chapter during the first few days of August 2018. Three months ago, on May 5, 2018, I texted Laura. (I text her often even though the messages don't go through.) I refer to the Mars Mission—more accurately called the Mars One mission. It's a metaphor. The Mars One mission will require the astronauts who go to Mars to say goodbye to their loved ones because the astronauts will not return to Earth.

Here's my text. "Subject: Mars Mission. Darling, Laura . . . it's now been over five months since you departed on your 'Mars Mission' to a Galaxy far far away . . . and it feels like yesterday. I miss you terribly. I still cannot grasp that you have moved on . . . and that I must journey on without you. I feel some solace by perceiving that you have not left me, you have simply gone before me. I'll catch up with you on Mars one of these days. Count on it, baby. Count on it. I waited 32 years to be with you. If I have to, I can wait another 32 years to be with you again."

In the meantime, I'll keep doing what Laura expects me to do—

Journey Brave.
Rage Brave.
Pray Brave.
Hope Brave.
Grieve Brave.
Write Brave.
Quest Brave.

And I'll count on Laura to do the same.

REGRET-PROOF YOUR LOVE. Here's a fourth thing I've learned, in addition to the three things I pass along in the chapter. I hope this spares you a special kind of misery.

It's all well and good to Grieve Brave after someone you love dies. But before you get to that stage, I advise that you do something that nobody told me to do before Laura left: Regret-Proof Your Love.

If somebody had told me that, I would have made different choices. I would have spent every minute looking deep into Laura's blue eyes and listening to her, talking together and laughing and telling stories and recalling all our favorite times together and holding hands, never letting go, holding her in my arms like it might be the last time. I would have never left her side. I would have shut down my iMac. I would have pulled myself away from work to devote myself to love.

But I was blinded by hope. Hope kept me from seeing the reality: Laura might not make it, her days might be numbered.

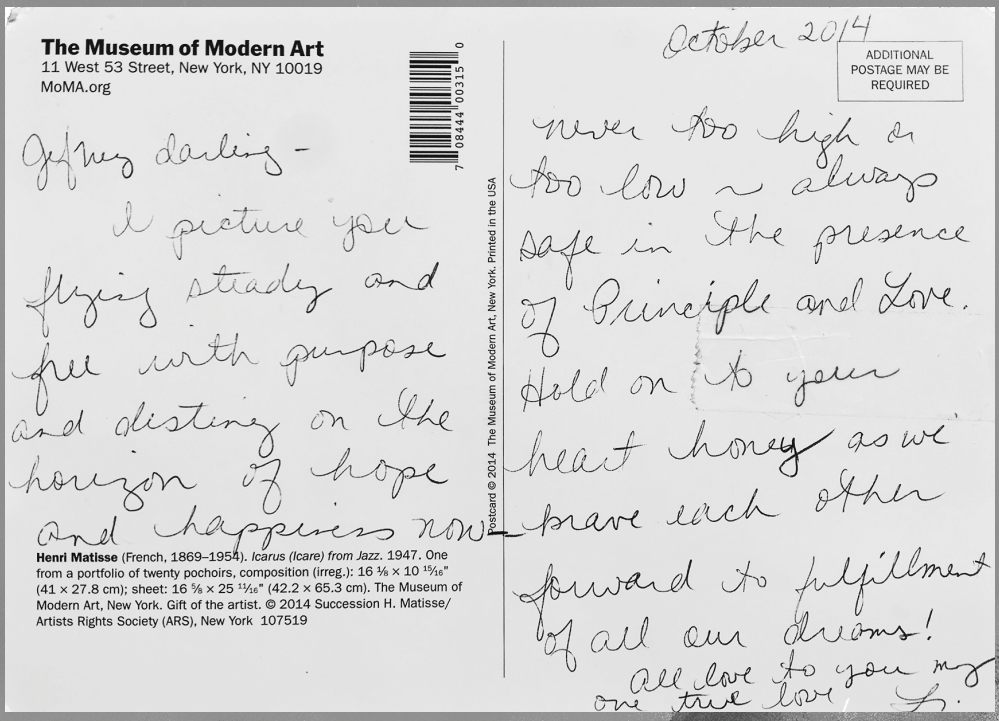
So here's my advice. Figure your loved one won't make it. And act like it. And if things turn out as you hope, and your loved one lives, you will not regret one single choice you made, not one single second that you spent together instead of doing something else.

A story in the Gospel of Luke (10:38-42) helped me see this. The Bible says that Jesus "came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made." Martha made choices from a heart full of love. A good host, she wanted everything just right for their guest, so she cleaned and cooked. But Mary grasped something that Martha didn't: Jesus would only be there for a short time. Mary regret-proofed her love. She knew what Jesus really wanted, what he expected. Quality time. And Jesus knew this was the pearl that would bless Mary. He told Martha, "'you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.'"

Both sisters may have hoped that Jesus would stay longer, but Mary assumed he wouldn't and chose wisely. By the time Martha was ready to be present in heart-to-heart quality time with Jesus, he was gone. She didn't get a do-over. Mary didn't need one.

When it came to Laura's brief visit, I was more of a Martha than a Mary. And I don't get a do-over. Sadly, I'd read the story many times, but I didn't see that it applied to my circumstances with Laura until months after she had gone. But it's another example of The Laura Effect—the Spirit that has taken hold of me to listen for ways to honor Laura's expectation that, by the illuminating effect of our sad story, we can together, Laura & I, somehow serve to help others.

Regret-Proof Your Love. Choose what is better, and you will receive the pearl of regret-proof peace that can never be taken away from you.



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Jef7rey darling –
I picture you
flying steady and
free with purpose
and destiny on the
horizon of hope
and happiness now –

Henri Matisse (French, 1869–1954). *Icarus (Icare) from Jazz*. 1947. One from a portfolio of twenty pochoirs, composition (irreg.): 16 ⅛ × 10 ¹⁵⁄₁₆" (41 × 27.8 cm); sheet: 16 ⅝ × 25 ¹¹⁄₁₆" (42.2 × 65.3 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of the artist. © 2014 Succession H. Matisse/ Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York 107519

Postcard © 2014 The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Printed in the USA

October 2014

ADDITIONAL POSTAGE MAY BE REQUIRED

never too high or
too low ~ always
safe in the presence
of Principle and Love.
Hold on to your
heart honey as we
brave each other
forward to fulfillment
of all our dreams!
All love to you my
one true love L.

October 2014. Jef7rey darling — I picture you flying steady and free with purpose and destiny on the horizon of hope and happiness now — never too high or too low — always safe in the presence of Principle and Love. Hold on to your heart honey as we brave each other to fulfillment of all our dreams! All love to you my one true love L.



Postcard from Laura (upper left)—layered over my painting *Flight Master*.

On the front of Laura's postcard: Henri Matisse's *Icarus (Icare) from Jazz*, 1947. Laura sent me this card because she knew how much I love Matisse and Greek mythology, especially the symbolic story of architect Daedalus and his son, Icarus. Daedalus made wings for himself and Icarus to escape their imprisonment in a tower located in the center of the labyrinth that Daedalus designed for King Minos to cage the monster Minotaur. But Daedalus made wings of wax and cautioned Icarus to not fly too close to the sun. Icarus ignored the warning, flew too close, his wings melted, and he fell to his death in the sea.

How could Laura foresee that little more than three years after sending me her postcard, she herself would fall Icarus-like to the sea. And I would fall too, in my heart.

FLIGHT MASTER | 2010. Oil and collage on canvas + pencil (grease, charcoal, graphite). 62 x 93 in.

James 1:2-4 The Message
Faith Under Pressure
"Consider it a sheer gift, friends, when tests and challenges come at you from all sides. You know that under pressure, your faith-life is forced into the open and shows its true colors. So don't try to get out of anything prematurely. Let it do its work so you become mature and well-developed, not deficient in any way."



Laura loves this artwork I did in 1989 when we were working together at Tenacre Foundation in Princeton, New Jersey. Laura loves the spirit of the Cosmos depicted as Architecture & Words—and she loves the symbolic Light that radiates from the star at the end of the handle of the Little Dipper, the North Star: the Star that guides us to safety along our eternal hero-path.

ULYSSES. The name of the painting on which I build this collage for Laura. Wait for me, my Penelope . . . your Ulysses will return home . . .

My simple prayer. Like David, the psalmist (Psalms 25:17), "The troubles of my heart are enlarged: O bring thou me out of my distresses."



You, God—divine Intelligence, Love—You reign supreme in human experience, so You hear us when we ask for help. Cry for help. As i cry in my simple prayer for one and all, "Clueless in Sacramento":

Please, God, we don't want to feel cast away, broken, and blue—
Give us a clue,
tell us what to do to get the help we need and help others too.

laura the laura effect

A prayer based on spiritual-human truth, and i'm grateful i've seen proof.

. . . and i hope, expect, plan—ask—to see more.

And i hear The Voice assuring me—assuring you too, whatever distress you might be facing in your classes and exams at Adversity University—"Don't worry, kiddo, I have *not* forsaken you. Like I said in Jeremiah 29:11, 'I'll show up and take care of you as I promised and bring you back home. I know what I'm doing. I have it all planned out—plans to take care of you, not abandon you, plans to give you the future you hope for.'

"Ditto for Laura. I've got great plans for her too.

"But don't be surprised if, as Virgil wrote in *The Aeneid*, 'Your road to safety will open first from where you least expect it.'

"(Yes, I'm familiar with Virgil. Who do you think inspired him to write that line?)"



WE BRING TO OUR GRIEF THE ARCHITECTURE OF OURSELVES.

BUILD BRAVE

MEMORIAL = MEMORY = MIND : GOD

THE MIDDLETON MEMORIAL

This book represents one form of tribute to Laura. But this book also serves as a threshold to another type of tribute to her that I hope to create—a building: an architectural monument. I've given it a name—

LIVE B.R.A.V.E. | The Middleton Memorial

There was a time, at the dawn of architecture and writing, when a building and a book were the same. This unity extended through the construction of Medieval cathedrals. The invention of the printing press by Johannes Gutenberg c. 1439 changed this.

Ancient Egyptians wrote their ideas about life and science and art on the walls and columns of their buildings. (The concept "column of text" still shapes the architecture of written expression today—like this column of text I'm creating here.) Ancient Greeks wrote on the walls and columns of their buildings too. And like ancient Egyptians, ancient Greeks did so to honor the human need, the deeply spiritual need, for a dimension of life they considered essential and a tangible expression of divine power: Memory.

Ancient Greeks associated memory with architecture. Their architecture-based memory system called *ars memoria* is still used by memory champions today. Ancient Greeks regarded memory as such an indelible and crucial dimension of mortality and immortality—of healthy, creative, coherent life—that they named one of their gods Memory. They called her Mnemosyne..

Ancient Greeks viewed the goddess Mnemosyne (pronounced like the word *mnemonic*) as the Mother of the Nine Muses—the nine sister goddesses presiding over the arts and sciences who inspire in us what to do, make, compose, create, explore, discover, and see.

In my essay "The Writing of Architecture: Mnemosyne and the Wax Writing Tablet," for the architecture journal *Oz* (newprairiepress.org/oz/vol12/iss1/2), I proposed that ancient Greeks regarded Architecture as Mnemosyne herself. How better to explain why architecture doesn't appear among the Muses? For the ancient Greeks, *Architecture was the Mother of the Muses*, the Mother of the Arts and Sciences—the art and science that included all the others and recorded them, chronicled them, inscribed their enduring history, ensured that human creativity and insights inspired by the Nine Muses would be remembered. In the cosmology of ancient Greece, Architecture *is* Memory.

Through its columns and walls—through its *monuments* and *memorials* erected to *remember* and honor who and what we love—architecture gives tangible human form to the godlike presence of Memory. Architecture establishes for all time our memories in stone. And not just in ancient Greece. Today. Like the Washington Monument. The Lincoln Memorial.

The Vietnam Memorial. And like the soaring stone monument etched with text that Mary Baker Eddy erected for her husband Asa Gilbert Eddy.

Ancient Greeks regarded architecture as the presence of God because architecture represents *resistance to forgetfulness*. And forgetfulness is darkness. Death. And we all know that. Loss of memory or zero memory signals the absence of God: the absence of Mind—another name for God, as Eddy illuminates in *Science and Health*. Whereas memory signals presence of Mind. Consciousness. The presence of God. Life.

Like the ancient Greeks, we rightly today regard loss of memory—absence of any coherent awareness of past, present, or future, failure to recognize the presence and identity of people we love and who love us—as a godless condition, a debilitating mental impairment, a dire terrifying sign of illness.

The movie *Coco* reminds us that the line between life and death, between existence and oblivion, boils down to memory. If we cannot remember or we are not remembered, we die. Or we might as well be dead. But if we can remember or someone can "Remember Me," as the Academy Award winning song in *Coco* says, we live.

The Middleton Memorial will draw from the deep well of these age-old deeply human, spiritually-sound concepts of memorial, monument, and memory—three words that come from parallel sources, etymologically, from old words meaning remember, remind, mindful: Mind.

Memorials and monuments represent Memory. Memory = Mind: God.

The Middleton Memorial will evoke the origins of book and building—origins infused with the purpose to *keep in mind* what we deem sacred.

And for me, that means Laura.

Through this book and, I hope, through a building, LIVE B.R.A.V.E. | The Middleton Memorial, I seek to summon the creativity that flows from Mind to *remember* Laura Dawn Middleton, my best friend of 35 years (and counting, as David Whyte assures us), who has entered some other Room in the grand Enigmatic House of Reality. I have no memory of any previous Room I've been in. Did someone I love in the Room I was in before this one, Earth, erect a tombstone for me? How many tombstones have been erected for me in how many Rooms during the eternity of my existence prior to landing here? How come I don't know? How come I can remember what room I was in before I sat down to write this, not to mention the thousands of other places, experiences, and, people I remember going back decades, but I can't remember a thing, not anything or anyone, before I was born into this Room. So on what rational basis would I believe that I will remember anything about this Room when I exit then enter a new Room? Why would I believe that Laura remembers me? She didn't remember anything *before* her planet Earth human experience any more than I remember or you remember. And our lives didn't start here. I could be wrong, obviously—I mean, how could we know? We're in the dark. Total recall? No recall. We sleepwalk from one Room to another in a House for which the great Architect hasn't rolled out the Floor Plan. But I don't believe our lives started here. And they don't end when we get to the Room that Laura's now in. Assuming that I will go to that same Room, though why would I assume that? Apparently, we go from mystery

Room to mystery Room, blind to where we've been, clueless about where we're going. Memory Zero. We don't have a map. We don't have the Floor Plan. All we have is hope. Hope that our enrollment in Amnesia University will one day end. Hope that we will graduate. Hope that when we receive our diploma we will no longer walk through the House of Reality from Room to Room in the dark, our memory chipset, our RAM, blank.

I hope that somehow the ungodlike spell of amnesia can be broken. We will discover the divine Floor Plan and wake up to see that the Architecture of Reality has been designed by a loving God. We will manifest the consciousness of Mind, Memory, and recall from one plane of existence to another where we've been and who we've known. Someone from a past Room will say to us here in this Room, "Hi, do you remember me?" And we will say, "Of course. How could I ever forget you? Gosh, it's good to see you again. How've you been? Remember that movie we saw together on Spaceship Pre-Earth?" We will feel loved. Because Memory is Love. We will feel alive. Because Memory is Life.

Like Dylan Thomas, I "rage, rage against the dying of the light" and don't like that Laura went way too soon "into that [not so] good night." Laura doesn't like it either. My visionary hopes fuel my quest to honor Laura's passing in spiritually and intellectually honest ways. Ways that are optimistic but not superficial. Idealistic but pragmatic. Laura's departure has caused me pain and sorrow, soul-searching and existential angst. She knows me. She wants me to be happy. But she counts on me to do what I must do:

Seek the truth.

Write the truth.

Build the truth.

And in these ways, through my life, the pages of a book, and the elements of an architectural expression, honor Laura. Remember Laura.

Laura loved to walk through the three cemeteries across the street from our house here in Sacramento, California. She especially loved to pause and sit for a spell on a favorite bench in the cemetery called Masonic Lawn. On one of our last cemetery walks together, April 22, 2017, I took photos of Laura sitting on her bench (see page 139). Andrew, the manager of Masonic Lawn, remembers seeing Laura on many of her walks and seeing her sit on that bench. I cried when he asked me, at our first meeting, "Would it be OK if I were to name that bench in Laura's honor?"

LIVE B.R.A.V.E. | The Middleton *Reminder*

I envision LIVE B.R.A.V.E. | The Middleton Memorial . . .
as an artistic expression of my love for Laura—and her love for me: our love story—and a tribute to star-crossed lovers throughout space and time.

I envision LIVE B.R.A.V.E. | The Middleton Memorial . . .
as a metaphorical stage-gate—a star-gate: a symbol of Laura's rite of passage from one world to another, from one experiential, psychological, and spiritual state to another, her transcension, her movement forward.

I foresee LIVE B.R.A.V.E. | The Middleton Memorial speaking to everyone, from Laura's friends and family to strangers down through the ages, all who visit Masonic Lawn or experience this memorial through photographs. A poetic reminder in concrete, steel, and stone—space and light—within the arena of a cemetery, to follow Laura's shining-star example and Live Brave.

As I write and design this book and break ground mentally and emotionally for Laura's architectural memorial, I hear what Laura said to me on her last birthday, her Earth Arrival Day (EAD), November 27, 2017, two days before she departed, her Earth Departure Day (EDD), "Darling, the thing is, don't be afraid."

In the face of archetypal inner and outer resistance that I've learned accompanies every worthy endeavor, I hear Laura encouraging me. "Jef7rey, build what you envision. Build what you foresee. Build our book of memories. Build your heart. Build your love letter in stone, composed of pure light and laced with sorrow, hope, and life. Build the truth. Darling, **Build Brave**."

And I will. I will Build Brave for Laura, my truelove and soul mate. I will do so here in Sacramento, where she came to live, but also came to die—I have finally grasped—unless, as we'd hoped till the end, prayer and reliance on Christian Science metaphysics could turn the tide. I will Build Brave for Laura in one of her favorite places, where she found, during her final year, beauty and wonder and peace . . . surrounded by the blissful quiet empty space of a fruit tree landscape where she loved to roam . . . and survey the tombstones and markers and memorial huts . . . and honor the tributes to loved ones lost . . . and read the names and epitaphs of people who walked the earth but departed before us.

I hear Laura's soft sweet voice, "Yes, my love, Build Brave. And Dream Brave. Our story isn't over . . ."

MASONIC LAWN

LIVE BRAVE LAURA

I took this photo on one of our last cemetery walks together.

APRIL 22, 2017

Laura loved to walk through the three cemeteries across the street from our house—Old City Cemetery, Odd Fellows, and the one in-between: Masonic Lawn, where she loved to sit on this bench. The bench will be named in Laura's honor.

Masonic Lawn will be the site of LIVE B.R.A.V.E. | The Middleton Memorial

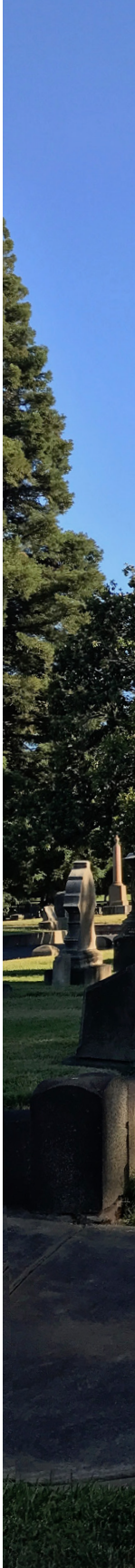




“FORESEE THE FUTURE”
—Delphic maxim inscribed on one of the 38 columns at the Temple of Apollo at Delphi in ancient Greece.

I took this photo, looking south, at Masonic Lawn Cemetery in Sacramento, California, on Thursday, June 21, 2018, the first day of summer. The photo shows where I envision LIVE B.R.A.V.E.|The Middleton Memorial. When I took the photo, I thought that the memorial could be at the end of the retaining wall on the left, in the space where I’ve drawn a horizontal gray rectangle. But that space has been claimed. So the site of Laura’s memorial will be toward the back right corner, along the right edge of the photo, the eastern edge of Masonic Lawn, where I’ve drawn a terra-cotta rectangle. (I use terra-cotta, Laura’s favorite color, throughout this book, especially for the title, *Live Brave*.)

I foresee that the memorial will provide a perfect place to hold a service for Laura.



MASONIC LAWN

BUILD BRAVE

BUILD THE TRUTH.

“If you bring forth that which is within you, it will save you. If you do not bring forth what is within you, what you do not bring forth will destroy you.”
—Jesus
The Secret Gospels of Thomas
Saying 70



To see the memorial—go to: archive.org/details/Jef7reyHildnerArchitect-Buildings-LBTMM
To see the impromptu video I made as I walked the site on June 21, 2018—
go to: archive.org/details/LiveBrave

MARY & ASA

LOVE BRAVE

STAR-CROSSED LOVE

MEMORIAL FOR ASA GILBERT EDDY

Mary Baker Eddy and Asa Gilbert Eddy, teacher and student, barely knew each other before they got married. Their marriage ended after only five short years, cut short by Asa's death. She honored him and their love by a monument in stone.

Monument at Tilton, NH, to Asa Gilbert Eddy, third husband of Mary Baker Eddy, who had the following inscription engraved:

ASA G. EDDY
DEPARTED THIS LIFE
FOR A HIGHER AND MORE GLORIOUS
SENSE OF BEING
JUNE 3, 1882.
A DEVOTED HUSBAND
A TRUE PHILANTHROPIST
A CHRISTIAN SCIENTIST

Why doesn't the monument include Asa's birth-date? Most likely because it could not be pinned down. He lived to the approximate age of 56.

This inspires me to Build Brave for Laura.


EDDY

Unlike James Madison, author of the Bill of Rights and fourth President of the United States, Laura Middleton was a private person. Like Asa Eddy.

But Asa's wife, Mary Baker Eddy, honored Asa and the values he stood for—stands for—publicly, via a monument erected in his honor. And I'm so grateful she did. I'm one of the beneficiaries of Mary's courage to honor her truelove through a public monument. I'm one of the people that Mary must have hoped that her tribute in stone to Asa would speak to down through the ages. Likewise, I wish to honor Laura. And I hope my tribute in stone will speak to someone 136 years from now.

Throughout her life, Laura kept a low public profile, but she made clear through her choices that she lived to serve and protect other people, which the ancient Greeks regarded as the divine spirit of a hero. Laura served humanity openly and publicly through her career as a Christian Science nurse, by serving as first reader at her church, First Church of Christ, Scientist, in New York City, and through her tireless non-profit work geared to helping teenage girls in Africa. Laura dedicated her life to worthy causes. She wanted her life here on Earth to have a tangible, positive, and lasting influence in the lives of others.

Mary Baker Eddy's monument to Asa, her third husband, who like Laura stayed in the background, honors his selfless spirit, which infused both his work on behalf of humanity and his help to her. Likewise, I seek to honor Laura's contribution to humanity and her value to me personally. I hope that the memorial's message, subtext, and creative expression, its very existence, will inspire people through the unfolding centuries to do for their loved ones what Mary did for Asa and I seek to do for Laura: honor her and remember her in a way that endures beyond my lifetime. Through my books and buildings, I feel called to weave more permanently—symbolically and poetically—Laura's passionate and compassionate idealistic influence into the fabric of human history.

I believe that if the Asa Eddys and James Madisons of the world deserve a monument then so do the Laura Middletons. Who more than James Madison would want a level playing field for everyone? I see him smiling in support as he hears me say, "Laura Middleton was no James Madison. But James Madison was no Laura Middleton."

Monument to James Madison, at Montpelier (Orange, Virginia) >

This inspires me to Build Brave for Laura.



PHOTOGRAPH BY JOHN EISENHARDT, 2018



THE SEA RANCH LODGE, SEPTEMBER 27, 2018. I TOOK THIS PHOTO ON MY FIRST VISIT BACK SINCE LAURA LEFT. ARRANGED ON THE TABLE: THE MATISSE ICARUS CARD THAT LAURA SENT ME (SEE PAGE 126), A CARD OF THE PAINTING *BETTY JEAN THIEBAUD AND BOOK*, BY WAYNE THIEBAUD, WHICH REMINDS ME OF LAURA, AND LAURA'S CARD TO ME FROM NEW YORK CITY, DECEMBER 14, 2015. THROUGH THE WINDOW, UPPER LEFT, YOU CAN SEE BIHLER POINT CUTTING THROUGH THE FOG.

Dec 14, 2015

Dearest Jeffrey darling,

I am eternally grateful to you for staying by my side and uplifting my spirits and indulging my sorrows and fears as I make my way back to health.

Your tirelessness and patience while attending to my every need with a steadfast hold on my true self — never fallen from health and wholeness — is so admirable to me.

Thank you for loving me at my very worst and making me feel my very best. If there is a ~~pea~~ pearl in this ordeal I don't think I'll be able to find it without you.

Pressing on...

Forever and TOTAL love, Laura





REMEMBER BRAVE

With any luck, Laura & I will one day find that our story has only just begun. We simply find ourselves during intermission between Act 2 and Act 3.

SEA RANCH

Books and buildings, tributes in words and stone, give us only two ways to remember someone we love.

Reshaping our behavior and lives in the image of our loved one's best qualities can become a living practical memorial to them. I hope to more fully express the golden qualities of Laura's character—to be more kind, gentle, anger-free, resentment-free, accommodating, lighthearted, serene, unruffled, gracious, courageous, and strong.

We also remember and convey what we hold sacred through pictures. In this section, I show selective photos of a special chapter in the story of the 3½ brief years that I got to be with Laura.

OUR ROCK ON BIHLER POINT, THE SEA RANCH, CALIFORNIA
I TOOK THE PHOTO ON THE OPPOSITE PAGE ON SEPTEMBER 26, 2018, FROM BIHLER POINT AKA BLACK POINT, LOOKING NORTH, ON MY FIRST VISIT BACK ALONE TO OUR FAVORITE PLACE ON EARTH. LAURA AND I SAT AND STOOD TOGETHER TIME AND AGAIN ON THE CONCRETE ELLIPTIC CYLINDER EMBEDDED ATOP THIS ROCKY BLUFF THAT OVERLOOKS THE PACIFIC. WE CALL THAT ELLIPTIC CYLINDER "OUR ROCK"—OUR ULTIMATE DESTINATION WHEN SETTING OUT FROM SACRAMENTO.

ON THE RIGHT, THE OXIDIZED-BRONZE US GEODETIC SURVEY MARKER EMBEDDED IN OUR ROCK.



Laura loves the sea. I love the sea too. We went there every chance we got. We usually went to Sea Ranch Lodge, perched on the Pacific ocean about 2½ hours north of San Francisco. We were drawn like a magnet to iron from our home in Sacramento 3½ hours away to the rocky bluff beyond the lodge, Bihler Point. Our favorite place in the world.

We went to Sea Ranch for the last time—and to our favorite place to stay overnight, Ocean Cove Lodge, 20 minutes south of Sea Ranch—on the last three week days of September 2017.

I went back for the first time alone exactly one year later. I took photos. The cloudy weather fit my blue mood. The stark beauty of the empty space reflected the landscape of my melancholy heart, full of memories.

REMEMBER BRAVE

THE SEA RANCH, CA. Bihler Point aka Black Point juts into the Pacific—framed by weather-beaten boards of Sea Ranch Lodge (seen in context in the next photo). As Laura asked me to do, I will someday stand atop Our Rock on that craggy bluff and scatter some of her ashes to the sea.







SEA RANCH LODGE. On this September 27, 2018, Thursday, one year after Laura and my last visit, sky and sea blended into a seamless fog, the horizon line invisible, symbolically true to my feelings and outlook. The wood plank walkway leads to the small gateway that frames Bihler Point, as pictured in close-up on the previous page. On the far right, you can see the second story landside window of oceanfront Room 5, where Laura and I stayed on April 26, 2017, and I took the photos of her that I show on pages 11 and 90.


REMEMBER BRAVE

PACIFIC PEACE, SEASIDE SADNESS

Laura usually drove. Two hours into our travel from Sacramento, the vineyard valleys of Napa and Sonoma behind us, we'd hit Jenner, CA, where the Russian River empties into the Pacific, shown in this photo, looking south. At Jenner, we'd turn right onto California 1, the famous Pacific Coast Highway (PCH), and head 70 minutes north to Sea Ranch, winding up and down along the breathtaking Northern California coastline.

I took this photo on September 28, 2018, on my return from Sea Ranch, my first trip there alone since Laura left. I stopped by the side of the road and sat down. I couldn't believe Laura wasn't with me. Overcast, the light fading, the outer world reflected my inner world.

The inset on the right shows happy Laura sporting her terra-cotta coral Sea Ranch hat on our trip with Shelaine and Elliott in August 2017 to Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming,





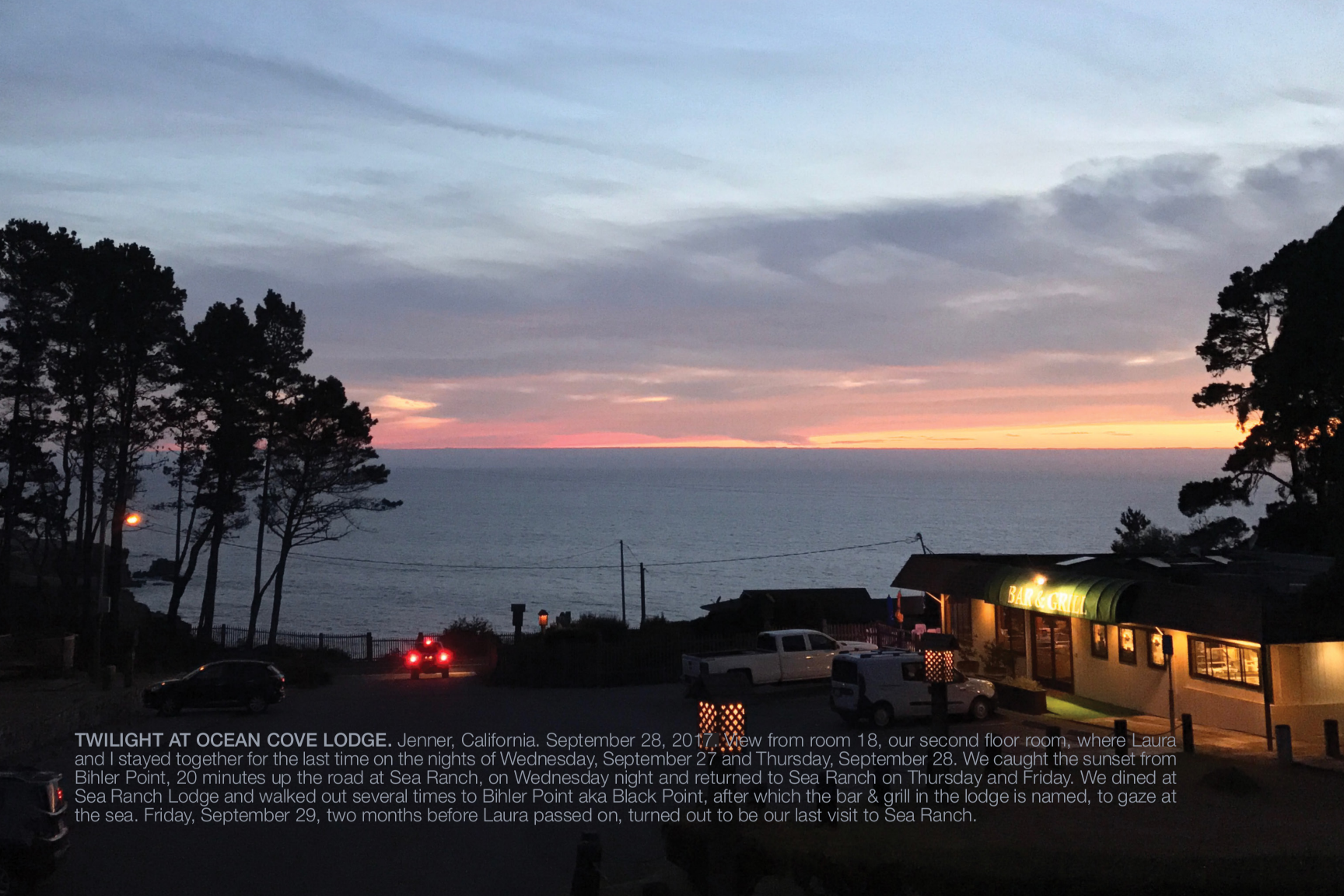
REMEMBER BRAVE





OUR ROCKY COAST AND WINDING ROAD. View of the coastline looking south from PCH on my late September 2018 solo trip back from Sea Ranch. I stopped to take this photo of the pocket beach where Laura and I walked and explored together.

LAURA. On the opposite page, a photo that I took of Laura on March 15, 2015, when we stopped at Coleman Beach, one of many small pocket beaches within Sonoma Coast State Park north of Bodega Bay.



TWILIGHT AT OCEAN COVE LODGE. Jenner, California. September 28, 2017. View from room 18, our second floor room, where Laura and I stayed together for the last time on the nights of Wednesday, September 27 and Thursday, September 28. We caught the sunset from Bihler Point, 20 minutes up the road at Sea Ranch, on Wednesday night and returned to Sea Ranch on Thursday and Friday. We dined at Sea Ranch Lodge and walked out several times to Bihler Point aka Black Point, after which the bar & grill in the lodge is named, to gaze at the sea. Friday, September 29, two months before Laura passed on, turned out to be our last visit to Sea Ranch.



SILHOUETTE OF LAURA, SEASCAPE AND STILL LIFE. Black Point Grill in Sea Ranch Lodge. March 17, 2015, five months before we learned that Laura was sick.



VIEW NORTHWEST FROM OUR ROCK ON BIHLER POINT
September 28, 2018, one year after Laura and I last looked together at this stunning vista and heard the roar of the waves crashing against the rocks and the howl of the fierce wind. I took this photo as I sat on Our Rock.



LAURA'S BEAUTIFUL PHOTO OF SEA RANCH LOOKING NORTHWEST. April 15, 2017
Laura took this photo farther north than Bihler Point, along the bluff on one of our walks.



OUR ROCK. View North from Bihler Point showing Our Rock—the concrete elliptic cylinder atop the bluff (far right)—September 27, 2018, one year after Laura and I sat there together for the last time. Far lower right corner: an "1876 Bihler Point" US Geodetic Survey Marker like the one embedded in Our Rock.

MY ROCK: LAURA. From the bluff a short walk farther north, Laura, wearing my sweatshirt, gazes west to the open sea shimmering in the light of the setting sun. We didn't know when I took that picture on May 10, 2015, that close encounters with new horizons of a third kind awaited Laura much sooner than we could ever have imagined.





REMEMBER BRAVE



SEA RANCH LODGE. September 29, 2018. As I sat at the long wood table inside the lodge and looked out the window to the ocean, I composed a still life on the chessboard inlay. W. H. Murray's book, which a friend gave me, has a quote that inspires me. Laura's sunglasses, which I gave her, encourage me to see the world through new eyes.

LAURA, MARS, AND THE JOSEPH PATH

Life is a metaphor for an eternally recurring story. Our lives are more allegorical than physical. We dwell in a world constructed of symbols.

I've never felt this more intensely than I have during the past 10 months since Laura's Earth Departure Day, November 29, 2017—as I hang on for dear life to the hope that, as Laura penned in her card to me on December 14, 2015, maybe, ideally, "there is a pearl in this ordeal" that emerges from the transformation of this nightmarish irritating grain of sand in my mind and soul and heart.

Enter W. H. Murray's book *The Scottish Himalayan Expedition*, the source of his most celebrated quote, his amazing insight into how human life works. Thanks to a generous friend, Murray's out-of-print book, which I've longed to own, has now finally found its way to my doorstep, 67 years after he wrote the book. And given how I thrill to the symbolic synchronicity of life's unfoldment, how much stock I place in the symbolic meaning of numbers, how they factor into the equation of our lives in deep archetypal ways, where would you think that Murray's famous quote would appear in his book?

Yes. On pages 6 and 7. And I can now verify, as a matter of scholarship, the actual wording and punctuation of Murray's quote. I don't have to guess anymore. I don't have to wonder which of the many renditions of his quote that you can find online has nailed it. I got it right here in front of me. Just as he wrote it in 1951. And I like honoring him that way. Here are Murray's famous lines:

"But when I said that nothing had been done I erred in one important matter. We had definitely committed ourselves and were half-way out of our ruts. We had put down our passage money—booked a sailing to Bombay. This may sound too simple, but is great in consequence. Until one is committed there is hesitancy, the chance to draw back, always ineffectiveness. Concerning all acts of initiative (and creation), there is one elementary truth, the ignorance of which kills countless ideas and splendid plans: that the moment one definitely commits oneself, then Providence moves too. All sorts of things occur to help one that would never otherwise have occurred. A whole stream of events issues from the decision, raising in one's favour all manner of unforeseen incidents and meetings and material assistance, which no man could have dreamt would have come his way. I have learned a deep respect for one of Goethe's couplets:

> Whatever you can do, or dream you can, begin it.
> Boldness has genius, power, and magic in it."

(It turns out that the couplet wasn't written by Goethe but by Irish poet John Anster, who published a free and poetical English translation from German of Part One of Goethe's play *Faust*.)

Murray doesn't acknowledge that Providence *inspires* our expeditions—whether to the Himalayas or to Mars, for real, or a Himalayan Expedition or a Mars Mission, figuratively speaking, some kind of inner and outer journey improbable and brave, from creative projects like books and buildings and stories that we hope to turn into screenplays to other kinds of creative breakthroughs and explorations so far beyond the horizon of our current limited vision that we can, at this point, only dare to imagine them, conjure them through art, and dream.

But Murray saw that Providence guides, provides, and abides every step of the way once we say, "OK." Once we say, "I'm in." "I'll go." I've seen this too. Once I get going on something (like this book), Providence swoops in and helps me. On my trek through life's labyrinth, Providence has opened ways for me to escape all kinds of apparent dead ends. That's why Laura's dead end has sent me into a deep funk.

Still, I do believe that the architecture of our human lives rests on the rock of a principle that Murray and Anster got in touch with. Mary Baker Eddy, the discoverer and founder of Christian Science, summed up the principle in *Science and Health* this way, "Love inspires, illumines, designates, and leads the way." Maybe the architecture of our lives before and after human experience also rests on the rock of this principle. I'm persuaded by Eddy that we all have a spiritual identity, indestructible and permanent. Immortal. Together we form an eternal oneness, but our individuality will never blur into ambiguity, anymore than could this happen with a sunbeam and the sun or a grain of sand and the shore, anymore than the number 6 could ever lose its individuality and blend into the number 7. Laura is Laura and always will be, eternally.

Laura has hovered deep in my heart since she left. And also somehow, every night, above the roof of my house, has hovered the planet Mars. I don't recall taking much note of the Red Planet before Laura left. But then I don't recall Mars ever hanging around so steadily and visibly. When I look at Mars's red glow in the night sky, I talk to Laura. I feel connected. We can hear one another. If only poetically true. Picturing Laura on her way to Mars, but a Mission beyond our present scope to fathom, appeals to my deepest most heartfelt wish at the same time. The visual helps me to more tangibly feel that Laura's life continues. And I got to believe that for Laura Mars, as I now like to call her, Providence, Love, is "raising in [her] favor all manner of unforeseen incidents and meetings and material assistance." Or whatever kind of tangible assistance she needs on her voyage.

Elon Musk has drafted plans for an actual trip to Mars. The astronauts who go on his Mars One mission must say goodbye to their loved ones because the first emigrants to Mars don't get a return ticket. They sign up for a one way trip. My darling has set out on her Laura Mars adventure, no doubt with zest, and she had to say goodbye to me and other loved ones because neither will she return to Earth. Maybe it's because Providence has called her into service elsewhere—but if so, why would such a Providence allow Laura to suffer as she made her exit? I can't make much sense of it, but I'm counting on Providence—Mind, Life, Love—to have drafted plans for Laura that include assuring her along her unique Mars Mission that she is eternally loved and never more than a heartbeat away from her family, friends, and me.

Meanwhile, back on Earth, 10 months after Laura's launch—shortly

after I returned from my solo trip to Sea Ranch at the end of September 2018—Providence drafted an expedition manifest for me. It came in the form of the following train of thought. It applies to everyone who dares to Live Brave, especially when down and out and life looks bleak.

As you move forward along your special hero-path in the service of others—for me, mainly through the transforming power of art—keep in mind these five good reasons to have heart. This is the truth, the truth of spiritually-based human experience, and maybe it can set us free.

1. James 1:2-4, Faith Under Pressure, "Consider it a sheer gift, friends, when tests and challenges come at you from all sides. You know that under pressure, your faith-life is forced into the open and shows its true colors. So don't try to get out of anything prematurely. Let it do its work so you become mature and well-developed, not deficient in any way." I believe that's one of the deep secrets of life. So hang onto it.

2. And hang onto this secret too. Hang onto this truth: An archetypal "magical" power shapes your life. The wand waved by the Creative Director, Spirit, Providence, is favorably configuring all circumstances on your behalf behind and in front of the curtain of your life, even if it doesn't look that way to you (or to others who look at you). And sometimes this divine power's shaping influence in our human lives plays out in ways that I call the Joseph Path. Which is to say, you will most likely throughout your life face the Goliath spirit of injustice, oppression, and adversity in human experience less as a David and more as a Joseph. Your battle will not be swift, as it was when David slew Goliath. You might even lose a few battles, maybe even many

battles, more than you think is fair, more than you think you can handle. But like another Bible role model, Joseph, you will not lose the war. The war of life, in which you bravely and shrewdly, perhaps at times by stealth, mount righteous rebellion against unrighteous authority, in your mind and actions—the ancient Greeks valued this facet of a person's character as the priceless diamond-heart of a hero—the war of life in which you question what doesn't makes sense and stay with your quest(ion) until you get it to make sense because it's *always* consequential (even though other people don't get your quest and you quest alone)—will extend through a period of time far longer than you'd hoped or could foresee. Your slow-motion slaying of the Goliath of roadblocks, setbacks, and heartbreaks might unspool over a period of time more like the length of the full feature film than its trailer. Maybe even more like the length of a trilogy of films, if not a nine-part Star Wars saga, than a 30 second teaser, let alone the split second it took David, with a simple slingshot and a measly pebble, to slay Goliath, to vanquish the villain.

Goliath is a metaphor. And if we're lucky enough to meet Goliath head on and win, like David—great. What could be better than the power to instantly slingshot the Goliath of mistreatment at home or at work, the Goliath of undervalued worth, lack of opportunities that allow our true talents to shine, feeling unlucky in love, the Goliath of obstructed financial and creative fulfillment, the Goliath of envy, hate, false accusation, betrayal, and disease? But if we find ourselves unable to wield that David-like power, perhaps crushed, devastated not only by our failure but also by our sense of impotence in the face of evil, Joseph's story gives us reason to hope.

Joseph Campbell, in his famous book *The Hero With A Thousand Faces*, distilled from his study of literature, comparative mythology, and comparative religion a universal path that threads through the labyrinth of human experience. He named this path the Hero's Journey. That's the path that Joseph in the Bible was on. Joseph's story maps the long-and-winding hero's journey from victim valley to victory summit. Countless people before and after Joseph have followed this path, including Mary Baker Eddy. We have only to see that this is the path we too are on, to see that when it comes to standing up to Goliath, we might find ourselves boxing in a 12-round-decision Joseph story not in a first-round-KO David story. The whole complexion of our fight with adversity shifts when we see what's really going on. As Marcel Proust said, "The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes." When we know what archetypal story we actually find ourselves in, we see our predicament and foresee our potential voyage of discovery with new eyes. And new hope.

Joseph was the man with the coat of many colors, a metaphor for his many talents and integrity, a good and principled man ruthlessly kicked out of his home by his own family and sold into slavery. Providence came to Joseph's rescue, but his journey was slow and painful.

When we find ourselves the victim of grave injustice, cast into the depths of a cruel nightmare, as I feel right now, having lost Laura to the Goliath of death, we can still reach for the lifeboat of reassurance that echoes through the ages and proved true for Joseph: Providence will sustain you and maintain you, lift you up, and safeguard, govern,

and guide you. Along your inner and outer journey, your special Mars Mission, Providence will lead you. Providence will step you through your customized winding, dipping, dizzying path that threads through the labyrinth of life toward your Providence-designed human destiny—a destiny that the divine Storyteller will most likely withhold from you, just as Providence withheld Joseph's destiny from him, waiting for just the right time, in the dramatic structure of our lives, to reveal it, but all the while graciously preparing us through triumph and tragedy. And don't be surprised if what Virgil said in *The Aeneid* proves true, "Your path to safety will open first from where you least expect it."

In the movie *Draft Day*, written by Rajiv Joseph & Scott Rothma, Ali (Jennifer Garner) tells Sonny Weaver (Kevin Costner), "Sometimes the correct path is the tortured one." In a Joseph story, the correct path is *always* the tortured one.

One way or another, we are all in a Joseph story. One way or another, in some compartment or department of our lives, we are all modern day Josephs. Like Luke Skywalker in the movie *Star Wars: Episode IV – A New Hope*. Luke found himself suddenly evicted from his home because it was bombed. His aunt and uncle were killed in the bombing. Luke lost his family, his house, and his home. How did Luke respond to this massacre and annihilation of life as he knew it—perpetrated by the Goliath of the evil empire? How did Luke react to his physical and psychological eviction from his home?

He could have wallowed in his misery, retreating into a life of anger, confusion, and despair. And he did retreat to a very painful place in his

heart for a while. He grieved. But he knew he had to do something, even if still grieving while he did it, because he no longer had a home, anymore than Joseph. Luke had to move on. He couldn't stay where he was, literally and figuratively. Through the mentoring influence of Obi-Wan Kenobi, Luke answered the herald call to set forth on a voyage of discovery. He set out Joseph-like on a path to surprising freedom and heights in the service of others. He lost his aunt and uncle, not a small point (especially for them), but Luke went on to find his sister and his father—and his true, noble purpose in life. These three things he could not likely have found were it not for having experienced his catastrophe.

I'm in a Joseph story. So is Laura. We thought we were in a David versus Goliath story like the movie *The Castle*. But it turns out we're in a Joseph versus Goliath story like the movie *The Bookshop*. Or like the ancient Greek myth, Daedalus, the architect father who lost his son Icarus, felled by the Goliath of recklessness and pride. The Greeks didn't finish the story. They left us hanging, filled with sadness for the grieving father and his beloved son. Likewise in the depressing *The Bookshop*, where (spoiler alert) Goliath also wins, we feel so hurt by the Laura-like hero getting kicked out of town that we may fail to turn the page in her story. Because what does happen to her? What does happen to Icarus and Daedalus? What happens next in the stories of these three Luke Skywalker-like Josephs? What happens next in the Joseph stories of me and Laura?

Laura's decimated body was the home she was evicted from. But her body wasn't really her anymore than an astronaut's suit is the astronaut.

On loan from the NASA Costume Department in the theater of human life, Laura's Spaceship Earth costume wore out. But Laura didn't. Doctors tried to repair Laura's astronaut suit. She and I and friends and loved ones tried to repair her suit through prayer. We all failed.

But in a Joseph story, leaving home isn't losing. Leaving home just means the story isn't over. Failing isn't final. As depressing as it is to find oneself in a Joseph versus Goliath story and not in a David versus Goliath story—because the beginning and middle of a Joseph story really suck—the end makes up for it. Because the Storyteller of our individual, unique Joseph story, an epic story, requiring of us courage, endurance, tenacity, resilience, and hope, a journey far more complex, bedeviling, and tortured than a swift knockout punch delivered to Goliath with a few pebbles and a slingshot, makes us a promise: *All's well that end's well, and if it isn't well, it isn't the end.*

On the Joseph Path, ironically, and also very sadly, because we pay a stiff price, we *must* leave our sense of home or sense of work and love behind in order to move forward, even if the circumstances that bring this about devastate us, or for all intents and purposes, like Icarus and Laura, even destroy us. But what choice do I have? Other than the irresistible Joseph and Luke Skywalker choice to turn the page in my story and see what happens next? Other than to trust Psalms 23:6, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow [Laura] All the days of [Laura's eternal] life." Wherever her path leads, no matter how long it takes, surely she will rise up Joseph-like, free from the Goliath dream, the Grand Illusion, of disease and death, and continue her selfless service to others. Surely she will continue to Live Brave and help others to do so too.

3. All along your way, remember the promise of Exodus 23:20. The promise proved true for Joseph. It will prove true for you. "Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared."

4. Ditto for Jeremiah 29:10-11, "This is God's Word on the subject: 'As soon as Babylon's seventy years are up and not a day before, I'll show up and take care of you as I promised and bring you back home [emphasis added]. I know what I'm doing. I have it all planned out—plans to take care of you, not abandon you, plans to give you the future you hope for.'"

5. Trust the Journey. More will be revealed.

There they are, five good reasons for us to have heart. Courage.

Laura has set out on her special Mars Mission, her Scottish Himalayan Expedition. I'm counting on Mind, Providence, Love to sustain her and maintain her, lift her up, and safeguard, govern, and guide her. And Laura's departure on her Mars Mission has launched me on mine. This book represents the first stage of my departure. This book signals that I have crossed the threshold from my old world and have begun to journey bravely into a new world, ready to Luke Skywalker my way forward. Joseph's calamity ultimately lifted him up and out of his valley of heartbreak and despair and brought him the priceless gift of power and influence in the service of others, including countless thousands during his lifetime and millions more since, including me. What will losing Laura bring me? What will losing me bring Laura?

In June 2014, Laura flew from New York City to visit me. She came to comfort me because I was reeling from the divorce of my second wife, who dumped me. One afternoon, Laura and I walked over to Tower Theater to see the movie *Begin Again*. Ten minutes into the movie, the projector went haywire. They had to begin the movie again. And then a few minutes into the restart, again the movie projector acted up. Then it happened a third time. Three times, the Tower Theater projectionist had to begin the movie *Begin Again* again. Maybe the divine Projectionist was having some fun, setting us up for a very special payoff somewhere down the line on our Joseph paths. Our love story resumed that June, 32 years after we first met. Six months later, Laura left her second marriage, to her wife of 16 years, to be with me. She risked everything so we could be to together. I risked nothing, except my heart. Maybe our love story will once again begin again. Maybe we again have parted company only for a spell.

Losing Laura has brought me The Laura Effect. My recalling that episode at the movies, drawing inspiration from it? Creating this chapter around it? The Laura Effect. And The Laura Effect has impelled me to survive the flood of angst and grief by building, like Noah, an ark. *Live Brave* is my ark. I feel Providence behind it no less than W. H. Murray felt Providence behind his expedition. I feel this book reflects the rescuing influence in my human experience of the one, universal Architect: Spirit. The ark of creativity has carried me through the rough seas of the human condition, kept me afloat on my voyage into the stormy night of the soul, into the tempest of the heart. Building this book has brought me the rainbow of solace, strength, and endeavor. But most of all, this ark has carried me toward a new horizon on a Dream Brave quest.

John Anster said, “Whatever you can do, or dream you can, begin it.” I have no clue what to do to “begin it,” how to take the first step toward making what I dream a reality, other than to wait. But maybe dreams themselves have “genius, power, and magic” in them and can get the ball rolling. Doesn’t every breakthrough start with a dream? A dream of freedom that we haven’t yet found a way to achieve? A jail break of the mind from the prison cell of hand-me-down false assumptions and set-in-stone misconceptions?

W. H. Murray dreamed about mountains, wondering if a small troupe could mount an expedition to scale the Himalayas. Einstein dreamed about gravity, wondering if Newton was wrong—maybe gravity isn’t a mystery: God hasn’t, in fact, withheld from our human comprehension a full and detailed grasp of gravity. Eddy dreamed about spiritual healing, wondering what it would take for us to heal the way Jesus healed and taught his disciples to heal because he said we could. Elon Musk dreams about Mars, wondering if it’s possible to colonize the Red Planet. I dream about the divine Architecture. I wonder, What if the Floor Plan of Reality isn’t a mystery—the divine Architect hasn’t, in fact, withheld from our human comprehension a full and detailed grasp of the Layout of the Building in which we dwell? Clear, precise comprehension of the Divine Design lies within our reach. So do scientifically verifiable answers to questions like “Are there steam rooms in heaven?” and “Where’s Laura?” Because God hasn’t cast us in the role of pawns in a Chess Game that we’re not supposed to understand. Mind doesn’t want us to “be put to confusion” (Psalms 71:1). What if we can move freely from one Room to another throughout the House of Life? What if we can Facetime people who have passed on and now find themselves in another Room?



"God understandeth the way thereof, and he knoweth the place thereof. "
—Job 28:23

Divine Mind knows where Laura is. Mind knows the Place, the Room, in the Mansion of Reality where Laura now dwells. And we are the expression of Mind: We coexist with and express Mind—as a sunbeam coexists with and expresses the sun. So we have the potential to know where Laura is too. We *can* discover the Mind-known answers to our Mind-inspired questions. The journey to these "iMind" answers starts by asking the questions, by beginning the quest—and trusting that more will be revealed . . .

A ZEST FOR ADVENTURE, A QUEST FOR INNER PEACE. Crater Lake National Park, Oregon. June 16, 2017. Laura's high school friend Jenny captured Laura looking so happy and healthy, and wearing her Sea Ranch hat, on their 10 day road trip from Sacramento to Seattle.



What if only a stubborn illusion makes us think we can't?

Until recently, you couldn't even talk to somebody on the other side of the globe, let alone see them too. But maybe some guy in a London pub in 1630 wondered aloud to his drinking buddy, "I really miss Betty. I hope she likes Boston. I wish there was a way I could talk to her, hear her voice . . . I wonder if there's a way to do that, you know, sit here and talk to people on the other side of the Atlantic? Do you think it's possible?" Yes. He just didn't know it. We had to wait for Alexander Graham Bell to come along, in 1876, and figure out how.

I know that every Quest begins with a Question, but I might just be the guy in a London pub. I don't know what more to do at this point than Dream Brave, Wonder Brave, and rely on Spirit, who inspires our work, our love, our dreams, our imagination, creativity, and conjectures, our questions and our quest, to lead the way. I know that we can count on God to supply the ingenuity, insight, patience, serendipity, and courage that we need for our journey. I also know that like Daedalus and Luke Skywalker—Mary Baker Eddy and Karen Blixen—I must do what the Joseph Path requires us to do when we lose someone we love, when like Noah, our home has been washed away by a flood. On the wings of The Laura Effect, I must Begin Again Brave.

And trust the "magic" of Providence.

"The footsteps of thought, rising above material standpoints, are slow, and portend a long night to the traveller; but the angels of His presence—the spiritual intuitions that tell us when 'the night is far spent, the day is at hand'—are our guardians in the gloom."

—Mary Baker Eddy, *Science and Health*



WORK & LOVE BRAVE

"Love and work are the cornerstones to our humanness."
"Love and work . . . work and love, that's all there is."

—Sigmund Freud

LAURA SHOWED ME HOW



I TOOK THE PHOTO OF LAURA ON THE LEFT WHEN SHE WAS SITTING ON HER FAVORITE BENCH AT MASONIC LAWN CEMETERY, ACROSS THE STREET FROM OUR HOUSE IN SACRAMENTO, ON THE AFTERNOON OF APRIL 22, 2017, THE SAME TIME THAT I TOOK THE PHOTO OF HER ON PAGE 139. HER EYES LOOK LESS BLUE THAN THEY REALLY ARE, BECAUSE THEY REFLECT THE GREEN TONES OF THE LANDSCAPE AROUND HER.

REMEMBER BRAVE

LAURA: MY NORTH STAR

laura dawn immortal



AMY'S, ROHNERT PARK, CA 11.03.17

"LOVE AND WORK . . . WORK AND LOVE . . . WHAT ELSE IS THERE REALLY?" — SIGMUND FREUD

our story isn't over . . .

THINK BRAVE

BLACK POINT GRILL
SEA RANCH LODGE 05.10.2015



laura dawn eternal

laura mars

"Don't be afraid." —Laura Middleton

"THERE'S ONLY ONE STORY: THE PRIMORDIAL WORLD-STORY, TOLD AND RETOLD, ONE SHAPE-SHIFTING STORY OF THE VISION-QUEST THAT TRANSFORMS THE WORLD." —JOSEPH CAMPBELL

WORK & LOVE BRAVE

DAEDALUS. The name of the painting on which I build this collage for Laura.
Wait for me, my Icarus . . . I will find you, and we will fly together again.

laura dawn forever

DREAM BRAVE

QUEST BRAVE DAEDALUS

LIVE BRAVE

laura

the laura effect



BIHLER POINT, SEA RANCH, CA

Laura iMinded me—read my mind, my heart, my soul.

TRUST BRAVE

Providence: "I have not forsaken you, either of you. 'I'll show up and take care of you as I promised and bring you back home. I know what I'm doing. I have it all planned out—plans to take care of you, not abandon you, plans to give you the future you hope for.'

"But don't be surprised if, as Virgil wrote in *The Aeneid*, 'Your road to safety will open first from where you least expect it.'"



"Every great hero transforms both physically and psychologically." —Kal Bashir



COLEMAN BEACH, CA 03.15.2015



CENTRAL PARK, NYC 12.27.2014

LOVE BRAVE

WE BRING TO OUR GRIEF THE ARCHITECTURE OF OURSELVES.

begin again brave



(D)ANTE | TELESCOPE HOUSE / 1991–1996. PHOTOGRAPH © YUKIO FUTAGAWA | GA PHOTOGRAPHERS. GA HOUSES 51, 1997

A shard of ancient suns — the steel-beam Telescope of the Dante|Telescope Monolith sights the North Star . . .

AKA THE ZLOWE HOUSE

ARCHITECT, PAINTER, AND WRITER JEF7REY HILDNER

launched The Architect Painter Press in 2005 under the banner, "Live Brave."

The Architect Painter Press presents Hildner's buildings, paintings, and insights—work that reflects his focus on the visible and invisible architecture of art and life. The Architect Painter Press also seeks to present the work of other artists. Current titles range from Hildner's books Visual Ef9ects, Daedalus 9, Henry Trucks — Painter, Picasso Lessons, and Garches 1234 to his books Metaphysical Warrior and Live Brave. His work also appears in a wide array of other venues—for example, Architectural Record, Journal of Architectural Education, ANY, Oz, The Christian Science Monitor, IMDb, and Global Architecture Houses. The book Architectural Formalism, by Hakan Anay, features Hildner's essay "Formalism: Move | Meaning" alongside essays by theorists Rosalind Krauss, Peggy Deamer, Robert Slutzky, and Colin Rowe. Hildner received an Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture award for excellence in teaching. His project Dante | Telescope House won the New Jersey Chapter of The American Institute of Architects "Blue Ribbon Award for Excellence in Design." He paints under the name Henry Trucks. He writes under the names Madison Gray, Eliot Plum, and Michelangelo A. Roland Slate. Hildner's one-word life theme—architecture—shapes his quest, his outlook, and his output, including his work as screenwriter and story architect. He earned his undergraduate and graduate degrees from Princeton University.



thearchitectpainter

| "The problem is to evoke the simultaneous presence of painting and architecture." —Theo van Doesburg | 1917



The steel-beam Telescope juts into the night sky toward the North Star

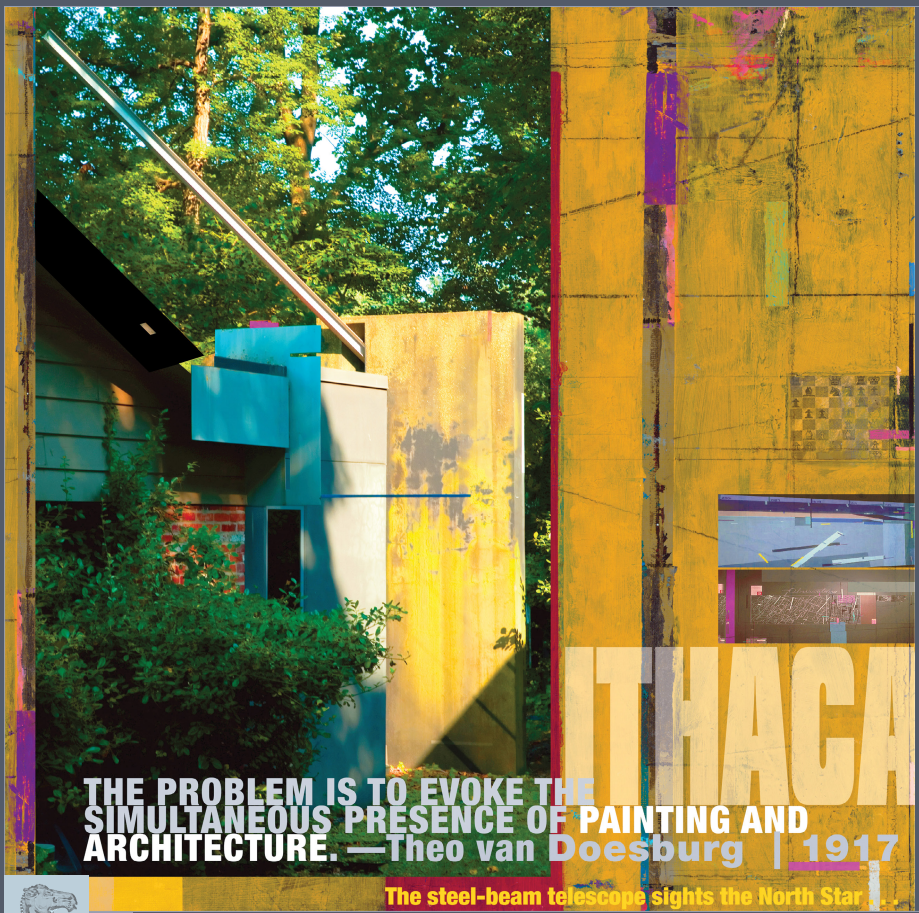
PHOTOGRAPH © YUKIO FUTAGAWA | GA PHOTOGRAPHERS. GA HOUSES 51, 1997



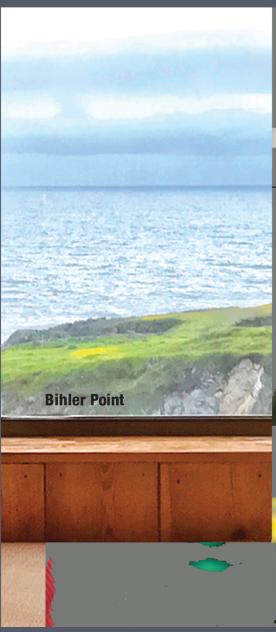


Laura enjoys an Impossible Burger at Crossroads Kitchen
West Hollywood, Los Angeles, California. May 4, 2017

LOVE


ITHACA
THE PROBLEM IS TO EVOKE THE SIMULTANEOUS PRESENCE OF PAINTING AND ARCHITECTURE. —Theo van Doesburg | 1917
The steel-beam telescope sights the North Star ...







"DON'T BE AFRAID."

LOVE

^ VIEW FROM SEA RANCH LODGE + LAURA IN PACIFIC PALISADES, LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA. MAY 6, 2017

WORK & LOVE

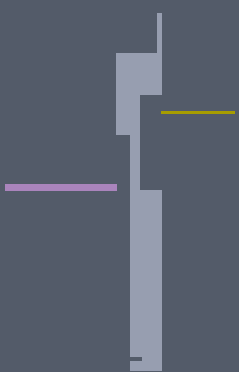
L I V E B R A V E

LAURA MIDDLETON

"He who learns must suffer. And even in our sleep, pain that cannot forget falls drop by drop upon the heart and in our despair, against our will comes wisdom through the awful grace of God."

—Aeschylus, *Oresteia*

IN THE NAME OF ART



THE ARCHITECT PAINTER PRESS
SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA

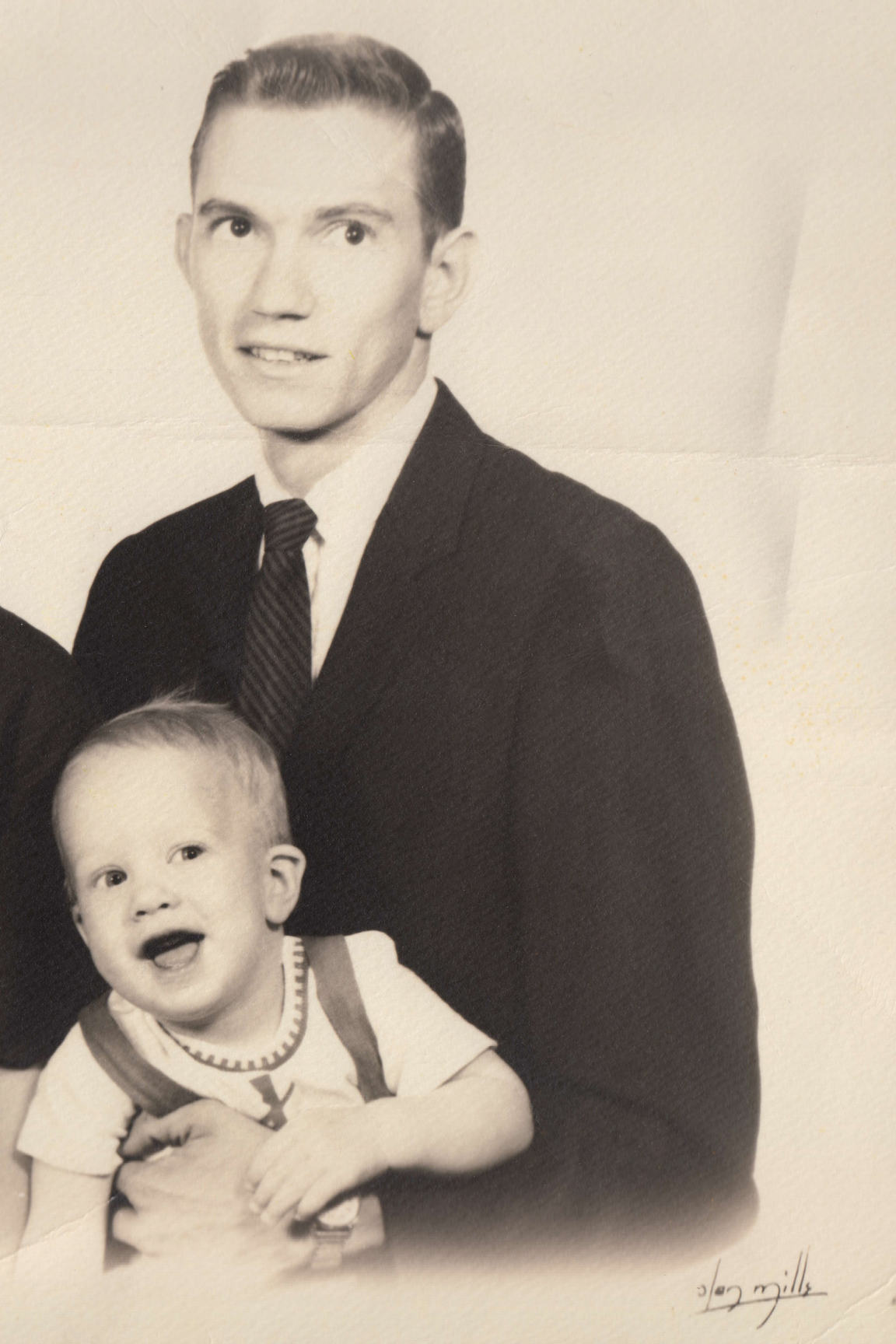


BABY LAURA

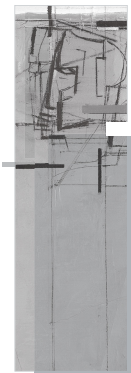
LOVE
LOVE
LOVE

NEXT TWO PAGES:
FAMILY PORTRAIT, C. 1965. LAURA, TERRY, AND THEIR PARENTS, ELAINE AND JOHN. ALL DECEASED.





I sat down at the piano on the afternoon of Saturday, October 20, 2018, and wrote this song of longing and loss. I'd had a dream on September 15 that Laura and I were on a ship at night. Could my dream signify not only Laura's love of cruises but also an archetypal stage of the Hero's Journey (the Joseph Path): the Night Sea Voyage? Then on the night of September 26, at Sea Ranch, as I stood there on Bilhler Point, on the bluff above the sea, the sunset turned to a night so dark that without the flashlight on my iPhone I don't know how I could have made my way back to safety on that moonless night. Those two night sea journeys, one asleep the other awake, and a third night sea journey, my ongoing voyage through daily life, welled up in me as I poured my heart out through music.



Night Sea

I lost my love to the sky
She fell to the sea without me
Where did you go, Laura Mars?
Rescue me, oh misery

I lost my love to the lawn
She walked there days before the dawn
Where did you go, Laura Mars?
Rescue me, oh misery

Night sea, rescue me
From misery, rescue me

I lost my love to memories
Weird mysteries, we're in the dark
Where did you go, Laura Mars?
Rescue me, oh misery

I lost my love to the night sea
She sailed beyond the empty stars
Where did you go, Laura Mars?
Rescue me, oh misery

Night sea, rescue me
From misery, rescue me



KHQ

"One of the functions of the Night Sea Journey is to enable the Hero to collect Magical Gifts (symbolically from the Old World) that will enable him (or her) to survive the Near Death Experience. . . . This forms the base of the further message that, though the Ordinary World and Self is being left behind, there is value in it. Remember, the Mastery of Two Worlds requires the incorporation of elements of both." —Kal Bashir

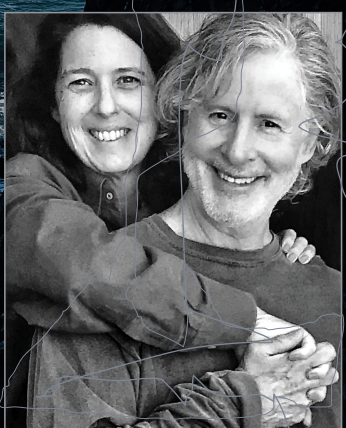


PHOTO: GOAT ROCK. View to Blind Beach, Jenner, CA Friday, November 2, 2018 — one year to the day after our trip with Paul and Maura to Dillon Beach, 26 miles south, where Laura got her last view of the ocean.

LIVE BRAVE

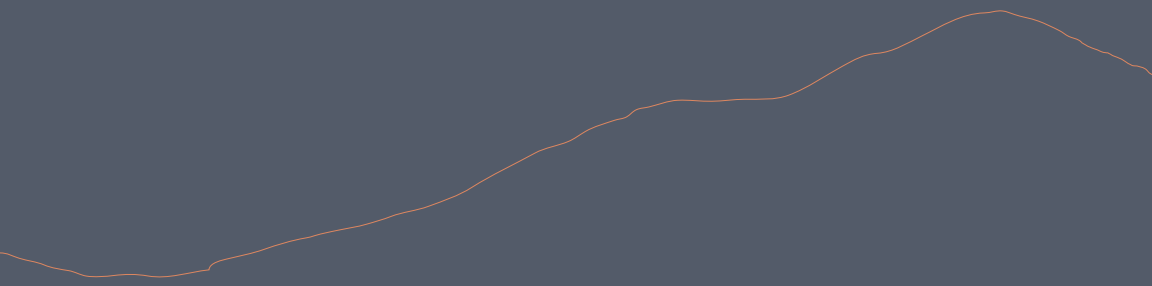
"We have not even to risk the adventure alone; for the heroes of all time have gone before us; the labyrinth is thoroughly known; we have only to follow the thread of the hero-path. And where we had thought to find an abomination, we shall find a god; where we had thought to slay another, we shall slay ourselves; where we had thought to travel outward, we shall come to the center of our own existence; where we had thought to be alone, we shall be with all the world."

—Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*



SACRAMENTO, CA. OCTOBER 22, 2017—38 DAYS BEFORE LAURA'S EARTH DEPARTURE DAY





LAURA LIVE BRAVE

DON'T BE AFRAID >

PROVERBS 10:7 "A GOOD AND HONEST LIFE IS A BLESSED MEMORIAL."

Earth to Laura—we want to FaceTime you and tell you how much we love you.
Who knows what's possible in the grand Observatory of Life?
Keep your Bluetooth and WiFi on, darling

GRIFFITH OBSERVATORY
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA
JUNE 25, 2017



WHAT WERE LAURA'S DEEPEST DESIRES?

Laura moved gracefully through human life spirited by what she called "a zest for adventure and a quest for inner peace."

These twin desires shaped her outlook and her soul.

And if you probe a little deeper? Love. Laura desired to love and to be loved.

This desire shaped her heart.

Laura's deepest desires surely remain her eternal desires because though she departed this plane of existence on November 29, 2017, Laura lives.

But Laura knew how hard losing her would be for me. On her 54th birthday, two days before she passed away, she tried to console me. She advised me how to face this adversity, how to brave my own quest. "Darling," she said, "don't be afraid."

FEARLESS LAURA DAWN MIDDLETON—wherever her adventure takes her, she will forever Live Brave and Love Brave. Zest Brave and Quest Brave.

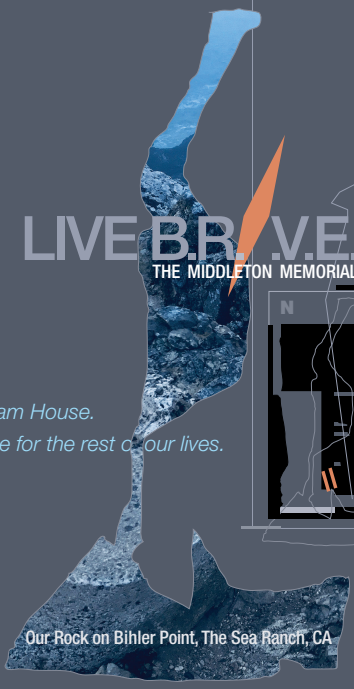
And through the gentle, tangible influence of The Laura Effect, Laura Middleton will forever remind us to live the same way and build our house on that rock.

To see the memorial—go to: archive.org/details/Jef7reyHildnerArchitect-Buildings-LBTMM

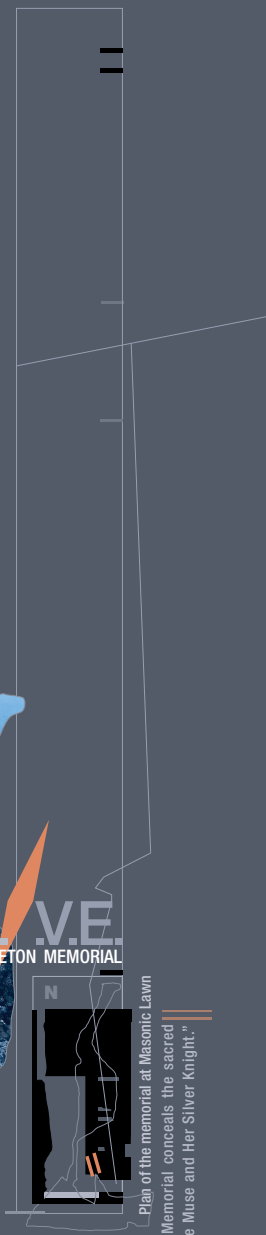
LIVE B.R.A.V.E.

THE MIDDLETON MEMORIAL

We hoped someday we would build our Dream House.
Where we would stay young together and live for the rest of our lives.



Our Rock on Bihler Point, The Sea Ranch, CA



Plan of the memorial at Masonic Lawn

The plan of The Middleton Memorial conceals the sacred "Chamber of Memory for the Muse and Her Silver Knight."

Sweet Star Angel, Laura Dawn, voyage

voyage on across the sea . . .

truth told, ours is an epic story age-old

—and more will be revealed,

more will unfold . . . more we will see

as we E. E. Cummings through the fog

from Bihler Point, Our Rock, bold:

carry my heart with you, my love,

as “i carry your heart with me

(i carry it in my heart)”

and pray we can fly together again

to brave horizons, stars, Mars . . . free

